Pattupattu

in English

by

J. V. Chelliah

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FOREWORD

When I was at Mayavati (Almora District) in the Himalayas, editing the *Prabuddha Bharata,* I wrote an article in that journal on *Pattupattu* and its literary beauties, and expressed the desire that some scholar should translate those poems into English so that the outside world might realise the glory of ancient Tamil classics. When I came down from the hills, I was agreeably surprised and pleased that such a work had already been accomplished, and approved by the Tamil staff of the Annamalai University. It would have been published by the University, but for some restrictions on its funds, which were to be exclusively used for works by the University staff. I was deeply grieved that such technical objection should have been raised about what I considered pioneer work, and made haste to ask that reputed literary organisation, the Karanthai Tamil Sangham of Tanjore, to undertake its publication. The Sangham with its enthusiastic Secretary, Mr. Kandaswamy, readily consented to take up the task, and secured a munificent patron to finance the publication. Accordingly, I sent for the Mss. and examined it at my leisure for three months. I read the translation through in a general way, and found that the spirit and meaning of the original was well rendered. Moreover, I examined with some care some of the important passages, and was pleased with their faithfulness to the original and the attractive way in which they were rendered into English. The claim of the author that the translation is not a paraphrase, but a literal rendering of the original, I found, was entirely justified. But at the same time, in my opinion, English idiom was not sacrificed for the sake of literalness. I leave the readers to judge for themselves the merits of the English rendering. The author's extensive knowledge of English and Latin literatures is sufficient guarantee of the merits of the English version. Indeed, some of the passages I have examined read almost like modern English poetry.

No doubt it is not to be expected that every one would agree with the interpretation and rendering of every passage in the translation. The author has, of course, followed the

commentary of the famous commentator, Nachchinarkiniar. But our translator has had the boldness to vary from him in a few passages, which he has indicated in the Notes. It should be admitted that the commentator has sometimes strained the meaning of phrases and sentences instead of giving a straight interpretation.

To resume the story of the Mss., war intervened, and the Madras Government refused to supply paper for the publication of a book by a Ceylon author! I counselled publication in Ceylon, and General Publishers Limited, Colombo, is now bringing out the work.

I do not propose to deal with the literary excellence of the *Pattupattu*, as the author himself has done this exhaustively in his excellent Introductions. The question of the dates of the Poems is still a moot point, and every one might not agree with the conclusions of the author. However, I am in hearty agreement with the general appraisement of the literary merits of the Poems.

A word about the author. He needs no introduction from me. He has been in the public eye as an educator and publicist for well nigh half a century. He was Professor of English, Vice-Principal and Acting Principal of Jaffna College, the successor of the famous Batticotta Seminary which contributed to the Tamil Renaissance in Ceylon and South India. He was also a member of the Ceylon Boards of Education and Examinations. I must add that his extensive knowledge in English and Latin literatures has been an excellent preparation for undertaking this arduous task.

The Tamil world should be grateful to Mr. Chelliah for accomplishing this monumental work in the evening of his life. I am glad to say that he is ready with another translation of selections from *Kurunthogai*, an Anthology of Love Odes belonging to the Sangam period. May he be spared for some years more to do work along these lines.

Swami Vipulananda

Professor of Tamil, Ceylon University, and
ex-Professor of Tamil, Annamalai University.

The Ceylon University,
December, 1946.

PREFACE

In attempting to render into
had two objects in view. One of
English the *Pattupattu* I have
our recent Tamil poets, Subra-
mania Bharati, in one of his poems, speaks of what Tamil people should do to advance the cause of their literature, and tells them
that one of the things they
people of other lands what
ought to do is to make known to
is worthy in their own literature.
We are the trustees of a rich heritage, and it is our duty to share with the rest of the world the best that has been said and written by our forbears.

The late Lord Chalmers, a former Governor of Ceylon and Pali scholar of eminence, told me, when I called on him at Cambridge some years ago, that he had heard that Tamil had an ancient literature worthy of being compared with ancient European classics, and asked me whether an English translation of any work was available. On my replying that I knew none except Dr. Pope's translation of the *Kural*, he exhorted me to try something along this line. This was the genesis of my desire to undertake the present translation.

I had another, and equally important, object in view. Ancient Tamil literature is a closed book to most of our educated people. I am ashamed to say that it is far easier for most of us to read in English than in Tamil.

Until very recently even Pundits here knew very little of Sangham literature. So I thought that an interest in it might be created in the minds of educated Tamils by an English translation.

I must here say that with this end in view my aim has been to make the translation as literal as possible without sacrificing English idiom. I have avoided paraphrasing and tried to translate almost every word in the text without adding words of mine. It is my hope that one who wishes to study these poems in the original can do so with the help of this translation. One marked peculiarity of ancient Tamil style, as I have noted elsewhere, is the use of long chains of sentences enclosing clauses within clauses, and connecting them with adjectives and participles, the finite verbs being few and far between. Good English style demands that such complexity should be avoided, and ideas should be expressed as far as possible with sentences and clauses with finite verbs. Hence I have had to split up these chains and supply finite verbs. In poems written in the first centuries of the Christian era one would naturally expect strange ideas and turns of expressions that may seem crude to the modern mind.

I have not attempted to modernise, paraphrase, or alter such to suit modern taste, for the reason that my translation is intended to help students in the study of the Tamil text, as well as for the benefit of the general reader. In any case I felt that the peculiar ancient flavour in matter or style should not be lost. I may observe, however, that I am struck with the fact that there is so little of strangeness either in ideas or style in these poems written

so many centuries ago.

The translation is in English verse. My opinion is that poetry should be translated in rhythmic language. In spite of the shackles imposed by verse, I have preferred it as it renders the poetic spirit better than prose. I have used Blank Verse—iambic pentametre without rime—for all the poems except *Pattinapalai*. For it I have used the iambic tetrametre without rime. This is an innovation for which I owe an explanation, as Blank Verse is generally written in pentametre. I have done this as I have felt that in rendering the short *vanchippa* lines mostly used in the text, the shorter tetrametre is more suitable than the pentametre. As to the omission of rime, I did not wish to be fettered with its shackles. Perhaps this apology is not needed, seeing that a great deal of free verse is nowadays written in English.

My task has been far from easy. Archaic words, strange constructions, and unfamiliar ideas make the study of these ancient poems very difficult. No one can study these poems without the help of the commentary of Nachchinarkiniar, without which they would have remained a closed book to modern readers. Wherever I have dared to depart from his exposition I have given my reasons in the Notes. Here I must acknowledge my great indebtedness to the excellent edition of these poems by the late lamented Dr. V. Swaminatha Iyer, perhaps the foremost Tamil scholar of our time. I have also consulted Swami Vedachalam's editions of *Pattinapalai* and *Mullaipattu*, besides a few works on the history of Tamil literature written by Indian scholars, chiefly the *History of Tamils* by Mr. P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar. I cannot but acknowledge my great debt to my countryman and eminent Tamil scholar, Swami Vipulananda, for looking over the translation and for writing a Foreword.

The Notes are brief and scanty for two reasons: a rendering of the text into simple English makes explanations such as are found in Tamil commentaries superfluous; again, most points that require elucidation are noticed in the elaborate Introductions to the poems.

No one could be more sensible than myself of the defects of this attempt which is almost pioneer work. I undertake to

correct any inaccuracies or errors that may be brought to my notice in a second edition, if such an edition is called for.

I shall be amply repaid for my trouble, if this contribution of mine stimulates others to work along these lines. I shall be equally pleased if this induces the rising generation of Tamils to take an interest in their national heritage.

Vaddukoddai,
Jaffna, Ceylon.
December, 1946.

J. V. C.

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திருநெல்வேலி.
TINNEVELLY.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

I
ANCIENT TAMIL POETRY

Periods of Literature

Man in his primitive stage lived next to nature, and was interested only in the sights and sounds around him. It was only later, when he became a member of society, that he realised his obligations to his fellowmen. He then awoke to the realisation of a Supreme Being who rules his destiny, and of a world beyond this. The songs that he sang reflected these three stages.

We find a striking illustration of this in the history of Tamil Literature. First came the Naturalistic period; then, the Ethical; and, finally, the Religious.

Naturalistic Poetry

Ancient Tamil poets who are known as Sangham poets belong to the first period. Their songs are mainly about what they saw and heard around them, and their simple life. They revelled in the description of landscapes, flowers, birds, and animals. They were also shaken by their elementary passions and emotions, especially love, and gave expression to these in their songs. They sang too of the details of their daily life. The dwellers of the hills spent their time in hunting. Those on the plains herded sheep. Those occupying rich lands cultivated their fields. As people of different regions got in touch with one another, their interests clashed, and fights, military expeditions, and wars were the result. So their bards sang too of heroes and battle-fields. In other words, the main subjects that engaged their attention were Nature, Love, and War.

Spontaneity

Macaulay's dictum, that, as civilisation advances, poetry declines, may not be accepted as a universal proposition, and yet there is an element of truth in it. It seems to be true at least as far as Tamil literature is concerned. Unsophisticated man sang naturally,

and the expression of spontaneous emotion is of the very essence of poetry. He sang as birds sing, because they must. Therefore, it is no wonder that these ancient poets excel the modern in spontaneity and naturalness, and so in the excellence of their poetry. As civilisation and knowledge advance, spontaneous emotions are complicated by thought and reasoning, and the wells of pure feeling are choked with thoughts of artificial life. Romanticism, to use a literary expression, gives way to classicism; emotions, to reflection; the natural, to the artificial. The poets that came after the Sangham period indulged more in ethical and didactic topics, and the religious poets that followed paid more attention to devotion than to pure poetry. So, if we are to taste pure poetry in Tamil, we have to drink at the fountain of Sangham literature. If Tamil poetry is to be restored to its pristine spontaneity and charm, these ancient poems should be our models.

Historical Value

These poems are valuable from another point of view. Tamil genius never paid much attention to the time element, and so historical and other documents from which we an idea of ancient Tamil life are wanting.

There are six sources of information for

could gain very much the reconstruction of the life of the people of those times: Tamil literary works, commentaries, accounts of foreigners, Ceylon records, inscriptions, and references in Sanskrit literature. Of these the

most important are the Tamil poems of the period. Literature embalms the culture, the ideas and the ideals of the people of the age in which it is produced, and it is in its literary works that the springs of thought and actions of the period stand revealed. So apart from the literary interest of these poems, they are a mine for reconstructing the life of the Tamils centuries ago.

II

PATTUPATTU

Pattupattu is a collection of ten idylls. An idyll is a short poem descriptive of some picturesque scene or incident, chiefly in rustic life. This collection of ancient poems comes under the category of Naturalistic poetry described above. It is not known by whom, and when, these poems written at different times were brought together. There is a Tamil stanza that enumerates their names, but they are not arranged in a chronological order. The following is an attempt to name them in a probable time order, and to give a brief account of them :—

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. *Porunarattupadai* (lit. A Poem of Recommendation to a Bard) was composed by Mudattamakanniar. The poet recommends Karikala Cholan to a bard as a patron of literature. It contains 248 lines.

2. *Pattinapalai* (lit. [a song of a] City and Separation) was written by Uritthirankannanar. It is based on the proposed separation of a husband from his wife, and contains a description of Karikala Cholan and his capital, Kaveripattinam. It is a poem of 301 lines.

3. *Mullaipattu* (lit. A Jungle Song) was written by Napoothanar. It is generally supposed to have been written in praise of Neduncheliyan. It deals with a wife separated from her husband who is away in the battle-field. It contains 103 lines, and is the shortest of the Idylls.

4. *Perumparnattupadai* (lit. A Poem of Recommendation to a Bard playing the larger *yal*) was written by the author of *Pattinapalai*. Kanchi and its king are celebrated in this Poem. It contains 500 lines.

5. *Siruparnattupadai* (lit. A Poem of Recommendation to a Bard playing the smaller *yal*) was written by Natthathanar, and celebrates a chieftain. It contains 269 lines.

6. *Nedunalvadai* (lit. Good Long Cold Wind) was written, it is alleged, by the great poet, Nakkirar. Its subject matter greatly resembles that of *Mullaipattu*. It has a fine description of the cold season, and contains 188 lines.

7. *Kurinchipattu* (lit. A Mountain Song) was written, it is supposed by another great poet, Kapilar. It speaks of love at first sight, in the hilly region. It contains fine descriptions of mountain scenery, and has 261 lines.

8. *Maduraikanchi* (lit. A Song of Madura) was written by Mankudi Maruthanar. It was composed in praise of the Pandyan king, Neduncheliyan. It contains detailed descriptions of his kingdom, his administration, and Madura, his capital. It is the longest of the Idylls containing 782 lines.

9. *Malaipadukadam* (lit. The Secretion Oozing from a Hill, and fig. The Echo of a Mountain) was composed by Perumkausikanar, and celebrates Nannan, a chieftain, and his court. It has beautiful descriptions of mountain scenery. 583 lines.

It contains

10. *Tirumurugattupadai* (lit. A Poem of Recommendation to the Shrine of Sacred Muruga) is supposed to have been written by Nakkirar. It contains a description of the war-god, Muruga,

and his different shrines on the hills of South India. It also the life of ancient Tamils. As a religious poem it is valued by Saivites. It contains 317 lines.

depicts

greatly

We may note some family likenesses among these poems. Nos. 1, 4, 5 and 9 (*Kuttarattupadai* as it is sometimes called) are *attupadais*, *i.e.*, poems in which bards are directed to patrons of literature. No. 10, although an *attupadai*, is of another kind. It does not refer to any patron, but is intended to direct people to a god. Nos. 2 and 8 are poems celebrating the glories of the Chola and Pandya kingdoms and their capitals. Nos. 8 and 6 have the same content : the separation of a wife from her husband ; and No. 7 has much in common with these. Nos. 4, 5 and 8 contain matter for history.
tions of mountain scenery.

Nos. 8, 9 and 10 contain fine descrip-

LANGUAGE

The following comments on the language and style of *Pattupattu* apply also to the poetry of the Sangham period in general. To a modern reader these poems will seem strange and difficult. There are words and phrases that have become obsolete, and grammatical forms that are utterly strange. Many of these poems were written at a time when Tamil was comparatively free from Sanskrit words and Aryan culture. It has been calculated that there are only two per cent of Sanskrit words in them.

This is not the only difficulty in the study of these poems. A beginner is confused by the strangeness of the construction of these poems. They cannot be cut into parts, and in order to

understand and appreciate them the central ideas should be first
grasped. Otherwise one would be
thought runs from line to line, so

lost in their labyrinths. The end.
to speak, breathlessly till the and

Ideas are connected by participles and
the finite verb is very seldom seen.

adjectives indefinitely,
The use of the finite
verb is probably a later introduction in all languages, and certainly is, in the Tamil language. Words and phrases seem to be out of place, and you have to go backwards and forwards to connect them together. There are very few suffixes to denote constructions. Sometimes the *agam* and *puram* elements (see below) are so interlocked that one is puzzled where the one begins

Martu and the other ends. It is here that we require the aid of a commentator to bring together connected ideas that lie sundered, to extricate unconnected thoughts that are involved, and to bring order out of apparent chaos. It is this

work of linking up that is called *martu* (மாட்டு) by Tholkappiar. It is not ideas alone that are thus disconnected. It should not be supposed that these ancient poets deliberately put difficulties

in the way of readers. This form of composition them, but strange to us.
was natural to
We are indebted to the great commentator, Nachchinarkiniar,
for his excellent work in this respect, although at times his language itself is strange and obscure. In some places he seems to make confusion worse confounded by his far-fetched linking up of words where a straight commonsense explanation is possible. However, we cannot do without him, as, but for him, th ese poems would have remained riddles to modern readers.

LITERARY APPRECIATION

Apart from other points of superiority of ancient poets to
modern ones, there is one quality which claims our Terseness admiration. It is their terseness of expression.
Advocates of the study of Greek and Latin classics lay emphasis on the fact that these works train one to give terse and concise expression to one's thoughts. A student of these ancient Tamil poems will realise that they are not at all inferior to the European classics in packing thoughts in terse, pregnant words and phrases. He will find that words are so dove-tailed as to give him the impression of an inlaid mosaic.

A distinguishing characteristic of a great poet is his love

Nature Poetry

of Nature. A true poet feels kinship with Nature, observes the various sights and sounds around him, and gives expression to his appreciation in arresting, realistic language. There are artificial poets, like the classical poets of English literature, who use stereotyped stock phrases about Nature merely as a frame to set off their poems, and not because they observe her directly, or love her for her own sake. The graphic language used by ancient Tamil poets indicates their first-hand acquaintance with Nature. One is struck with their pen-pictures of mountains, clouds, the ocean, rivers, fields, woods, animals, birds, trees, plants, and flowers. They seem specially fond of flowers. In every one of these Idylls there is a surfeit of flowers of every hue. In the *Kurinchipattu*, for instance, the poet recounts in one passage as many as ninty-nine flowers of the hilly region. The Tamil people, it may be noted here, continue to have this partiality for flowers even to the present day. Birds and animals are similarly introduced in every poem. The descriptions of

beautiful landscapes are wonderful pen-pictures. The portraiture of the cold season in *Nedunalvadai*, and of the evening in *Kurinchipattu*, for example, are masterpieces that could hardly be excelled.

It must be admitted that beyond sensuous appreciation, these poets had no higher conception of Nature as leading to thoughts of God or man. In other words, these poems do not

contain, to use a famous phrase of Matthew Arnold, a criticism of life. Nor do they attain that unique conception of Nature of which Wordsworth is the High Priest: Nature as a living soul with which man can commune, and from which he could derive hope, consolation,
age, and confined

and instruction. These poets lived in a simple
themselves to the concrete conceptions of life.
and could not rise to abstract ideas.

The graphic realism of these poets is seen not only in their
wonderful portraiture of Nature,
but also in their

Realism delineation of female beauty. This has, we may observe, been a special trait of all Tamil poets. In quite a number of these Idylls we have most detailed descriptions of female beauty. Some of these descriptions may offend modern taste, but we must remember that in that simple age women's dress was scanty, and, therefore, descriptions of the different parts of the body would not have been considered indecent. We ought not to judge ancient life by modern standards. This graphic realism is also evident in the descriptions of the life of the people, as noted below.

Imagery Imagery is another strong point with oriental poets. The abundance of similes almost bewilders imagination. Similes are of two kinds: the primitive, and the elaborate. Many of the similes in these poems are simple and primitive, but there are also those that are elaborate containing more than one point of comparison. There are instances of similes within similes. Very often a simile is long drawn out, and the poet seems to lose sight of the point of comparison and goes on to develop some word that happens to be in it. Examples of such similes are pointed out in the Introductions to the various poems.

In this connection we may point out another striking peculiarity. The oriental, at least the Tamil, has a partiality for furnishing attributes, whether relevant or not, to nouns for the purpose of decoration. There are many illustrations of this in these poems. Sometimes they are adjectives, sometimes phrases, clauses, and even long passages. For example, whenever the

earth is mentioned, the poet feels that he should add some such phrase as "surrounded by the ocean," although there is no point in it in the context. Such decoration may seem too gaudy to a westerner who lives in a country which is dull and colourless, while it is natural to one who lives under tropical skies where Nature revels in colour and sunshine. If the sense of beauty is one of the essentials of poetry, the oriental has certainly an advantage.

Modern Tamil poetry contains far-fetched similes, metaphors, hyperboles, fantasies, and conceits that are often ridiculous and childish. They resemble those found in that degenerate English poetry called metaphysical. But these ancient poets sang naturally, and so did not indulge in these extravagances.

ATTUPADAI

There are in this Anthology five poems of a peculiar class called *attupadai* that deserve special mention. They are: *Porunarattupadai*, *Perumpanarttupadai*, *Sirupanarttupadai*, *Malaipadukadam* (sometimes called *Kootharattupadai*), and *Tirumurugattupadai*. To avoid repetition it would be convenient to note here their general features.

An *attupadai* is a poem in which a bard or minstrel is recommended to go to a patron to solicit help from him. There were four kinds of minstrels in ancient times: *porunars*, *panars*, *koothars*, and *viraliyars*. *Porunars* are bards who formed a part of the retinue of kings, and served them both at home and abroad in war. At home they sang songs exalting the king and his heroic deeds. In times of war they stirred the army with their songs. It is these war-bards that contributed a great deal to the literature of the ancient Tamil land. Although they had the patronage of kings, they do not seem to have been well off always. *Panars* are minstrels of a lower order who lived a gypsy life, and lived in the outskirts of villages. Sometimes they were engaged in fishing (see *P. P. Padai*). They suffered from chronic poverty, and were generally half-starved and dressed in dirty and ragged clothes. When, however, they succeeded in getting into the favour of kings they were well-fed and given valuable presents. They were gluttonous, drinking toddy and eating meat to excess. It is almost unbelievable that kings gave such miserable creatures chariots, horses, elephants, and lands out of all proportion to their status and needs. Perhaps the kings loved music to an extraordinary degree, or more probably, their inordinate vanity was flattered by these minstrels.

Koothars were actors, and play-acting was popular at the time. *Viraliyars* are female bards.

It may be noted here that while the first four *attupadais* conform to our definition, the fifth refers to devotees directed not to a patron, but to a god.

For further remarks on the various *attupadais* see Introductions to these poems.

THE LIFE OF THE PEOPLE

We have already noted how valuable early Tamil poems are in reconstructing the life of a by-gone age. There is much to be gathered in the various anthologies and epics of the period, but we confine ourselves only to those things that are brought out in the Ten Idylls. The Introductions of the various Idylls will deal in detail with these. But a short connected summary will be helpful here.

These poems deal with the Tamil country: the Chera, Chola, and Pandyan kingdoms and some feudatory states. **Government** The kings and the chieftains were not

absolute rulers. They had ministers and councils to assist them in ruling their territories. There is a mention of five assemblies or councils in the Pandyan kingdom. They consisted of ministers, priests, generals, ambassadors, and spies or intelligence officers. There were judges too who were thoroughly honest and impartial. Besides these, village affairs were conducted by the elders, who gathered together in *manrams* which were originally open places under trees, and later buildings. The kings like the great Karikala Cholan took a keen interest in agriculture, commerce, and literature. Good roads were constructed, and guards were appointed to prevent traders from being robbed. We gather that the revenue of the kingdom was derived, apart from taxes, from tolls, custom duties, tributes or spoils taken from defeated kings, and gifts from grateful subjects.

War

Ancient Tamils were war-like, and seem to have been an aggressive race constantly engaged in military expeditions. Lust of power, cattle-lifting, and private grievances were some of the motives for these wars. The rural people were especially exposed to these ravages, while the dwellers of cities were comparatively immune, as they lived in fortified places. The king led the forces in person in a chariot attended by his generals and bodyguards, infantry, cavalry, and elephants. The instruments used were swords, lances, battle-axes, bows and arrows, and shields. For defence they erected strong walls

surrounded by deep moats with a thorny jungle between The various operations of war are noticed in the sections, and *Puram* below. There are fine descriptions of the

them. camps in *Mullaipattu* and *Nedunalvadai.*
Agam destroyed the conquered territories unless
royal mitted to them. Stones were erected in

The victors utterly
the vanquished sub-
places where heroes
that fell in battles were buried. Cremation came in only with the advent of the Aryans.

Ancient Tamils were great traders. They crossed the high
seas and traded with such distant lands as Greece,

Trade Rome, and China, besides neighbouring countries. They exported peacocks, pearls, gems, pepper, salt, etc., and bought the products of foreign countries, such as horses. Salt is often mentioned as an article of internal trade. Kaveripattinam was the great emporium of those times, and the exports and imports were stamped with the Chola tiger mark, and the customs were well organised having efficient officers.

Fortunately we have a compact and detailed account of two of the greatest cities of the time: Kaveripattinam

Cities and Madura. From this we can find out a great deal
of the life of the people of those
count see the two poems, *Pattinapalai* and

times. (For a full ac-
Maduraikanchi).

Occupations and Caste

The Aryan division into four castes came in only after these people fully penetrated the country. No doubt Tholkappiar mentions the Aryan system in his grammar, but that was an attempt to foist the alien order on the Dravidian people. There were, however, classes having various occupations. The chief of these were *ulavars*, or farmers who were also called *vanigars*, as they combined the work of cultivation with trade; *valayars* or fishermen; *idayars* or shepherds; *veduvars* or hunters; and *panars* or singers. Besides these, there were goldsmiths, blacksmiths, carpenters, chank-cutters, and manufacturers of various articles of trade.

Women

Great prominence is given in these poems to women, and their features are described in great detail in a number of passages. Women enjoyed great freedom and moved in public. Purdah was introduced into India only after the Muhammadan conquest. Women danced with young men, sported in public places, and went to the temples with their offerings. They attended the kings in their palaces. In hill districts they were courted before their marriage. However, they were modest in their ways. For instance, they would not invite a stranger to be their guest personally, but would

give the invitation through their children. The queen mentioned in *Nedunalvadai* had apartments which no male except her husband could enter. Women arranged their hair into five braids. They wore many kinds of jewels made of gold, pearls, and gems. Women of the lower classes wore ornaments made of conch shells. They painted their faces and applied perfumes to their bodies. Flowers were universally worn. Women of the hill country wore dresses made of leaves and flowers, while some of them were practically nude. Women of the higher classes wore fine-spun silks and fine-coloured garments. Weaving was evidently a highly developed handicraft. As to the dress of men, the king wore starched clothes; his counsellors, turbans; and his bodyguards, coats.

Food

Rice was the staple food. *Tinai* (panicum) is often mentioned. The people of those times were not vegetarians. They ate the flesh of rams, deer, fowl, iguana, and even pigs. They also ate fish and crabs. Other articles of food were jak and mango fruits, honey, sugar-cane, *aval* (roasted rice), different kinds of cakes, and pickled fruits. Evidently the Brahmins were vegetarians. Toddy was a popular beverage. Meals were served on teak and palmyra leaves.

Houses

The huts of the common people were built of clay and covered with thatch. But the rich lived in mansions, some of them seven-storeyed. These mansions had terraces, piazzas, and porticoes. Palaces had lofty gateways with *gopurams* (towers). The king sat in an audience hall to attend to the affairs of the state. In his palace there were artistically made lamps, bedsteads, and water clocks.

Amusements

People amused themselves by dancing, singing, witnessing plays, wrestling, and attending ram, cock, and bullfights. Women and men sported in the sea and river. They had periodical festivals. The women played a kind of game called *kalangu* (See Introduction to *P. P. Padai*).

The hospitality shown to strangers, the honesty of the *vanigars*, the impartiality of the judges, the modesty and chastity of women, the gratitude and loyalty shown by soldiers to their king, the devotion of the king to the welfare of his subjects: these are indications of the high ethical sense of the people of those times.

Virtues

Music was in an advanced state of perfection. There were seven notes in the musical scale. There is reference

Music and other Arts

to proper rules of music. There were different tunes appropriate for the different regions, and even tunes

the Idylls

for the different parts of day and night. the various musical instruments used are

In two of

mentioned..
The most important of them is the *yal*, of which there were different kinds, and one special kind of *yal* is mentioned. The kings patronised musicians to an astonishing degree, and they were of different classes. (See General Introduction: *Attupadai*). The hyperbolic statement that robbers were converted by music would show how highly developed was the art of music at that time. Dancing was another fine art cultivated, and it was indulged in on festival occasions on specially built stages.. Plays were acted.

There are references to painting and architecture. They made images, but they do not seem to have been in any enduring material, as no statues are now found in the Tamil country. " Horse lore " is mentioned, but that might have come from the Aryans. There is a mention of a treatise on cooking composed by Bhima, one of the Pandavas. Even thieving was reduced to an art !

In short, at least a thousand five hundred years ago the Tamil people were in a highly advanced state of civilization.

RELIGION

At the time in which some of the poems were written Aryan influence was just beginning to be felt, and in the case of others it had made some headway. Muruga, the Dravidian war-god, was worshipped generally. Some of the Aryan divinities also were worshipped side by side. In fact, the Idyll that is chronologically the last was composed in honour of Muruga. In this Idyll, however, Muruga was identified with Kartigesa, the Aryan war-god of six faces and twelve arms. Kotravi was the war- goddess of the Dravidians, and we find her invoked in some of the Idylls. The

Aryans identified her with their war-goddess, *Durga*. In the *Mullaipattu* Mayon, the Dravidian god of the *mullai* region, is identified with Aryan Vishnu. Vishnu and Lakshmi are mentioned a number of times in the Idylls. In the *Tirumurugattupadai* two other Aryan gods: Indra and Brahma, are mentioned. Siva, who is worshipped as the supreme Deity now, is mentioned in two of the Idylls: *Malaipadukadam* and *Tirumurugattupadai*. In the former he is described as the god who lives in the Naviram hill, and in the latter, he has only the rank of the other major gods. There is also a reference to minor and "local" gods.

Besides the Vedic religion, the Buddhist and Jain creeds competed with the ancient faith of the Dravidians. Besides Brahmin priests and ascetics, there were Buddhist and Jain monks.

Various superstitions that were prevalent are noted in the Introductions to the poems.

One thing stands out prominently in the religious life of the people of India, and that is their spirit of religious toleration. The kings and the people were tolerant of all the faiths in the land. If the Aryan creeds replaced the Dravidian in time, it was a case of peaceful penetration, rather than of violent perversion.

DATES OF COMPOSITION

The dates on which these poems were composed are not easy to determine. Research in Tamil literature and history is still in an elementary stage, and there are very few materials for determining them. Some scholars place these poems in the first century of the Christian era, and others postpone them to the end of the third century. No reputable scholar now believes that they were written before the Christian era. It is generally agreed that they belong to the Sangham period. It is also the opinion of scholars that these poems were written on dates near one another. There are, however, a few that think that in the case of some a few centuries intervened. We are safe in saying that three of them : *Pattinapalai, Porunarattupadai* and *Perumpanarttupadai,* were written in the same period, because the first two celebrate the same king, and were intended to be presented to him, and the third was composed by the author of the first. Probably *Porunarattupadai* is the earliest of the Ten Idylls. At any rate it was composed before *Pattinapalai,* as the former makes no mention of the later exploits of Karikalan, which the latter celebrates. If we could fix the date of Karikalan, we could fix the dates of these three poems approximately. But this too is a moot point. (For further discussion of this see Introduction to *Pattinapalai :* Date of Composition). It has been pointed out that the first two of the above poems and *Mullaipattu* are evidently the models on which all the other Idylls were composed, and, therefore, may claim a priority over the others.

There is one internal evidence that affords great help in determining the comparative time relation of these poems. The Aryans penetrated the Tamil land gradually, and there was a

time when the Tamils lived their own lives uninfluenced by any external culture. Consequently the Sanskrit words used in some of these poems are almost nil, while in others there is a progressive increase. Similarly there are poems in which we find very few references to Aryan customs, manners, and worship, while in others there are many. It is safe to say that the less a poem reflects Aryan influence, the more ancient the poem is. For example, scholars are agreed that *Tirumurugattupadai* is the last of the Ten Idylls, judging from the style, language, and numerous references to Aryan culture and religion.

Epigraphy is a valuable guide to historical reconstruction, but unfortunately there are practically no inscriptions in South India that are of much value in this investigation. We have to be content with the general impression that these poems were written, at the latest, 1,500 years ago.

PORUL : AGAM AND PURAM

There is one peculiarity in ancient Tamil poetry that must be understood for grasping its full significance. Tholkappiar, the ancient grammarian and critic, in his famous work, *Thol-kappiam*, has a section called *Poruladikaram* which deals with the subject of poetry : the incidents of life which form the object (*porul*) of poetic treatment. It contains also chapters on the emotions which poetry appeals to. The first five chapters throw a great light on the peculiar civilisation evolved by ancient Tamils. We may observe here that a similar treatise is not found in any other language.

As we have noted before, the attention of the ancient people was mainly centred, besides Nature, on Love and War. Thol-kappiar divided *porul* or the or subjective element, and

subject matter of a poem into *agam* *puram* or objective element. The first relates to Love, and the other to Life, especially War and affairs of state. True Love is considered under five physiographical divisions :

1.	*Punarthal*	(union)	*Kurinchi*	(hill country)
2.	*Pirithal*	(separation)	*Palai*	(desert)
3.	*Irrutthal*	(wifely patience)	*Mullai*	(jungle)
4.	*Irrangal*	(wifely pining)	*Neithal*	(sea-coast)
5.	*Udal*	(wifely sulkiness)	*Marutham*	(fields)

Puram which relates to war and state has matter corres- ponding to the above physiographical divisions :—

1. *Vetchi* (cattle raid) *Kurinchi* 2. *Vahai* (victory) *Palai*

3.	*Vanchi*	(invasion)	*Mullai*
4.	*Thumbai*	(war)	*Neithal*
5.	*Ulini*	(siege)	*Marutham*

(The above are the principal divisions. There are two more, but they are not usually regarded as important).

It would be noted that *puram* matter is given the names of flowers, as these flowers were worn in war according to the different regions to which the soldiers belonged. To take a poem as an illustration, the scene of *Mullaipattu* is laid in a jungle region, and the wife of the chieftain awaits with patience the return of her husband, who comes home after the invasion of a neighbouring territory.

It must be understood that Tholkappiar in laying down these rules did not make them arbitrarily, but only codified what he found in the best ancient poets. Those who followed him were guided by these literary conventions.

VERSIFICATION

The following will be found useful to those who wish to study these poems in the original. Two kinds of metres are used in these poems. One is *asiriappa* peculiar to the *agaval* verse, in which each line consists of four feet or sections, each foot containing two syllables. These lines have a flowing and rapid swing. The other is called *vanchippa* in which each line consists of two feet, each foot consisting of three syllables. These have a slow, halting swing.

Tamil verse is characterised by both rime and alliteration called *ethukai* and *monai* respectively. Ancient poets do not seem to be bound strictly by rules of prosody as modern poets are. We find in these poems not only rimes in separate lines, but sometimes in the same line in place of alliteration; and sometimes alliteration serves the purpose of rime. There are also here and there lines that have neither rime nor alliteration, but musical effect is nevertheless produced by suitable words. Music is produced not only by these poetic devices, but also by the harmonious combination of musical words which the poet selects instinctively. We must not forget that Tamil poems are meant to be sung, and these poems when sung produce a most pleasing effect on the ears of those who are conversant with the Tamil speech.

PATTINAPALAI

PATTINAPALAI

INTRODUCTION

NAME

Pattinapalai is a combination of two words: *pattinam*, city and *palai*, desert or separation. The city is Kaveripattinam, a famous Indian emporium of ancient times, and the capital of the Chola kingdom. As to *palai*, the word means literally desert, and, as noted before, the corresponding *agam* or subjective element of a poem treating of the *palai* region is separation of lovers. So *Pattinapalai* means in this case the proposed separation of a wife from her husband who wishes to go to Kaveripattinam. The poem is not called *Palaipattu* after the analogy of *Mullaipattu* or *Kurinchipattu*, two of the Ten Idylls, presumably because in this poem the city looms larger than the separation element, which is very small, being confined to five lines only.

PORUL OR SUBJECT MATTER

These five lines forming the *agam* element of the poem are deftly inserted in the middle and the end (tr. 11. 261-264 and 879-882). The poet proposes to go to that great patron of Tamil poets, Karikala Cholan, with a poem composed to celebrate his reign with a view to getting a reward from him. His wife is inconsolable at the prospect of separation, especially as her husband has to go through a desert to reach the Chola capital. Such is the love existing between them that he postpones his visit, and prefers to stay at home even if he stood to lose the Chola kingdom. It may be noted here that the poet did go at a later period, and, according to another ancient poem, was rewarded with sixteen lakhs of "gold."

The remaining 296 lines are devoted to the *puram* or objective element of the poem. There are two subjects treated: the Chola capital, and the Chola king.

KAVERIPATTINAM

The city was variously called Kaveripattinam, Kaveri-poompattinam, Pugar, and Kakanthi. The first and second names were given because the city was situated at the mouth

of the river Kaveri. The addition of *poom* in the second name was due either to its beauty or its abundant flowers. The name Kakanthi was given to it because it was at one time ruled by a king called Kakanthan. Pugar means a sea-port

town.

Apart from its literary merits, this poem should be of great interest to Tamil people, as it is the earliest description of a Tamil city. There is also a very good account of the city in a later poem, *Silappathigaram*.

The opening lines give us a fine pen-picture of the rich Chola country watered by the "Kaveri mountain-fed." The city was full of parks, groves and lakes. It was surrounded by a strong wall with a gate on which the Chola tiger-mark was set. People of different occupations and castes dwelt in the various parts of the city. Being a sea-port town, the fishermen's quarters and their life are described in some detail. There was an outcaste village in which pigs were reared. There is a vivid description of the quarters where alms-houses and monasteries existed. The streets that faced the sea had mansions of rich citizens. In the streets of traders were houses of many storeys with wide piazzas. The *Vanigars* (*Vellala* merchants) lived in a crowded section. Flags were flown in the bazaar street where food was sold, and in toddy shops. There were temples and resthouses. The port, the ships riding at anchor, the warehouses and piles of merchandise are all graphically described.

The city was a great emporium and port, and an account of the trade carried on by it is found in a noted passage of the poem. The imports and exports piled up in the custom-houses were so great that they are said to look like hills. They were stamped with the Chola tiger-mark by officers who were vigilant.

The following gives us an idea of the trade of the city :

> Himalayas sends gems and gold,
> While Kudda hills, the sandal-wood
> And *akhil* ; pearls from the south seas come ;
> Red coral from the eastern sea.
> The Ganges and the Kaveri bring
> Their yield ; Ceylon provides its food,
> And Burma, manufactures rare.

It is noteworthy that Ceylon was at one time the " granary of the East," and fed the fertile Chola kingdom. But now it goes a begging for its staple food ! The pearls " that from the south sea came " may have come from the sea adjoining Ceylon, or from Korkai, an ancient Pandyan capital.

KARIKALAN

The next section of the poem deals with the exploits and

the reign of Karikalan the Great, known as Perm-thiru-mavalavan. He was the posthumous son of Ilayon Nedunchenni. *Porunarattu-padai*, another Idyll, says that he inherited the throne when he was in his mother's womb. Enemies seized his throne, but, as

this poem tells us, he escaped and regained his kingdom. There are accounts of his exploits scattered in a number of ancient Tamil poems, but only in these two do we find reliable and full accounts of this king. According to these poems he was a great warrior, statesman, and empire-builder. In ancient Tamilakam he was a sort of Napoleon or Caesar. This poem recounts the races which he subdued: the Oli chiefs, Aruva kings, Northern kings, kings of Kudagam, the Pandyan king, minor shepherd kings, and Irungoval. The Oli and Aruva kings probably ruled the districts between the Chola and Pallava kingdoms; the Northern kings (Vadavars) are Pallava kings; Kudagam is Coorg; the minor shepherd kings (Pothuvars) are chiefs of the pastoral tribes that inhabited regions north of the Pallava kingdom;

Irungoval was a chief that
Chola kingdom. The poem

ruled over a district south of the
speaks of even the great Pandyan
king as being scared by Karikalan.
Porunarattupadai speaks of his victory at Venni,
where he defeated the combined armies of the
Pandyan and Chera kings. *Agananuru* says that he
defeated
nine kings, and *Silappathigaram* speaks of him as carrying his conquests as far as the Himalayas and setting his tiger-mark on the crest of a mountain. This is probably an exaggeration.

Like the great Washington, Karikalan was "great in war, great in peace, and great in the hearts of his countrymen." This poem speaks of his creating villages out of forests, deepening tanks, enriching his kingdom, making shrines secure, and constructing fortifications. He removed the Chola capital from Urunthai

(Ūraiyur) to Kaveripattinam, presumably because he thought that a sea-port city would be more advantageous for commerce.

Karikalan had another side to his character. He was a great patron of poets. When we remember that sustained compositions of ancient Tamil poetry

the first long
that formed
the model of the other Idylls were written during his reign, the extent of the king's patronage of literature will be realised.

There is a little intimate touch at the end of the poem that makes the whole world kin. This dreaded warrior is spoken of as romping with his children :

The crimson paste rubbed on his chest
Is now worn off by frolics wild
Of his gold-bangled children dear.

The king loomed so large in the popular mind that many

legends gathered round his name, as it very often happens in the case of supermen. The poem says that in the popular mind

he could mountains move
Fill up the sea, bring down the sky
And make the moving air stand still.

There, again, is the fanciful explanation that he was called Karikalan because his leg was burnt when he was a child. This story may be discounted, as his grandfather too bore this name. There is another legend that an elephant sought him out and presented him a royal garland. Even the statement of his Himalayan expedition seems doubtful. There is no mention of it made in this poem. However, these apocryphal stories have the cumulative effect of indicating to us what Karikalan was in the minds of his countrymen.

SOCIAL LIFE

We can gather something of the life, the customs and manners of ancient Tamils from this poem. One of the most interesting passages of the poem is that relating to the *Vanigars* (*Vellala* merchants) who formed the backbone of the population and lived in unity in a crowded section of the city. In a splendid passage (ll. 225-252) their virtues are recounted: their unwillingness to take life, their abhorrence of thieving, their piety, their charity, their spirit of love, their sense of justice, and their truthfulness:

They speak the truth and deem it shame
To lie. For others' goods they have
The same regard as for their own
In trade. Nor do they try to get
Too much in selling their own goods,

Nor give too little when they buy.
They set a fair price on all things.

One is inclined to think that these primitive people had higher ideas of honour than present day society with all its vaunted civilization. There was no

morality seems to have been
"business is business."
haggling, and their commercial
based on a higher principle than

We catch a glimpse of the amusements of the people. The children played with "tiny cars that horseless move." The fishermen played in wrestling grounds, and sometimes fought in earnest. On full moon days they quitted work, and with their womenfolk adorned themselves, ate, drank toddy, and bathed in the sea all day long. The outcaste people amused themselves with ram and cock fighting. The rich citizens enjoyed them-

selves by indulging in sensual pleasures at night, sang lyrics, and acted and witnessed plays. The women in the traders' quarters enjoyed themselves in the wide piazzas of "cloud-capped, lofty, storeyed halls." The city was much beflagged. There were various flags to mark places of worship, toddy shops, halls of disputation, locked baskets of tasty victuals, and masts of ships in the harbour. Rice was thrown as an offering over food exposed for sale. Memorial stones were erected to mark the graves of heroes, and encircling them were spears and shields. The water supply of the defeated enemy was cut off. Rich people built many-storeyed houses with many courts. Men and women wore garlands on festive occasions. The women of the common classes wore garments made of leaves.

The city was cosmopolitan. There were foreigners from different parts of the world "speaking diverse tongues." Most of them were traders, but others were teachers of ripe scholarship, probably Aryans, who carried on disputation in lecture halls.

RELIGION

There are many references to the religious life of the citizens. We find primitive forms of worship side by side with more exalted cults. The fishermen

> plant the sword of the gravid shark.
> To seat their sea-god great.

They believed in sea-bathing to wash away their sins. The dreadful shrine mentioned in the poem is probably Kali's.

The most popular deity worshipped was Muruga, the war-god. At the festival held in his honour,

> Harmonious with the dances wild
> Of frenzied maids by the war-god stirred,
> The flutes do pipe, the lyres do twang,
> The drums roll loud, and the tabors sound.

Besides these Dravidian deities, there were Aryan gods also. Lakshmi's form was painted on the walls as the guardian deity of the city. We are told that "the good and worthy gods protect the city's limits." The Vanigars seem to have been influenced by the Vedic religion :

They do their duties by the gods,
Oblations offer, tend with care

Fine bulls and cows, exalt the priests
That teach the Vedas four.

The words used are: *amaras, avuthi,* respectively gods, sacrifice (*yagam*),

and *nanmarayor*, meaning
and Aryan priests that 22

PATTINAPALAI

taught the four Vedas. There is also reference to "hermits with matted locks."
Aryan *rishis*,.

We also find something like the *linga* worship. We may say here that originally, there was no idol worship in the Tamil land, and it seems to have been introduced later by the Aryans. There was only a *kandu* or pillar placed for common worship in public halls. This may have been later developed into the phallus. That the people grasped the idea of a universal God may be inferred from a reference to a flag "to the spotless, glorious God adored by all." That they had an idea of another world is evident from the phrase, "in this our birth and in the next."

That Buddhism had begun to invade the Chola land is evident from various references in the poem. Asoka, the great king had sent, before the Christian era, Buddhist missionaries all over the East to propagate Buddhist doctrines. South India was beginning to be influenced by Buddhism and Jainism at this time. Abstention from meat, horror of taking life, and charity to men and animals that were so characteristic of the *Vanigars* were partly at least due to the ethics of these religions.

Buddhist and Jain Influence

The existence of diverse forms of faith side by side shows the spirit of toleration so characteristic of the people of India, and is in striking contrast to the intolerance shown even at the present day in Western countries.

LITERARY MERITS

Pattinapalai is one of the finest of the Ten Idylls. We have noticed the characteristics of ancient Tamil poetry in general, and *Pattupattu* in particular. These comments of course apply to this poem, which is eminently one representative of the ancient Naturalistic school. Therefore the following comments are supplementary and illustrative.

Pen-Pictures

The poem is full of splendid pen-pictures. The description of the Chola kingdom, its capital with its various sections, its customs, houses and bazaars, and the feats of the Chola king are told with vivid realism and wealth of detail.

One of the most realistic and graphic passages of the Poem is the description of the havoc wrought by Karikalan on his enemies. Here the poet brings home to us the desolation wrought by the king by vivid contrasts between the former and later conditions of his enemies' territories. The stags with rugged

horns freely leap about where there used to be tanks. Elephants roam about where God's emblem was worshipped by all. Streets of towns are now overgrown with grass and thistles, and there

the jackal shrieks
And howls ; the owl's sad hoot is heard.

The bittern whoops. Dread goblin bands.
And female ghouls that corpses eat
With hair dishevelled fill the place.

The storeyed mansions
and were the scenes of

" whence parrots prattled honied words"
many a sumptuous feast lie ruined :
now the hunter leather-shod
Comes here with drum and curv-ed bow
And steals the stores ; from empty bins
The bent-billed owl in daylight hoots.

The characteristic fondness of Tamil poets for describing female beauty finds an illustration in the following passage :

In them do gather women fair
Whose feet are pink ; whose thighs, close knit.
Adorned are they with gauds of gold.
Their hips are broad ; their dress is soft ;
Fair are their skins red coral-like.
Arrayed are they like peacocks gay ;
Their eyes are deer-like, and their speech,
Like the parrot's prattle.

There are a number of passages in the poem that

show how

Love of Nature

much the poet appreciates Nature. The passage on the devastation wrought by Karikalan and the simile quoted below about the mingling of the river and the sea are examples of this appreciation. The poet is fond of flowers. The city contains " gardens bright with flowers "; there is " a riot of gaudy tints that gleam from fragrant flowers that edge the banks "; the city is " blest with never-failing flowers " (an allusion forsooth to *poompattinam*). The slender fingers of ladies are likened to *kanthal* blooms. The Kaveri in its course brings in " pearly sands " that are scented with flowers. The water-lily, the *neythal* blossom, the flower of the sugar-cane, and white blossoms of creepers, are some of the flowers alluded to in the poem. We find references to the following birds and animals: the lark, the cuckoo, the parrot, the peacock, the dove, the elephant, the tiger, and the deer.

We have a number of beautiful similes in the poem. Some

Imagery : Similes

of the similes are simple having only one point of comparison, but arresting. For example, the ships at anchor are

like tuskers huge

Which shake the pegs to which they're tied.

The fishermen's huts against which fishing-rods are placed look like

Memorial stones round which lean spears
And shields.

The nets placed on the
light patches mixed."

white sands seem like " gloom with moon-
The poised and just hearts of the Vanigars
are compared to the pin in the middle of the yoke of their plough.

The sides of war-drums with their dark and white rings are like
the eyes of demons.

There are also elaborate similes. Karikalan's escape from
prison is compared to the escape of a trapped elephant :

As a long-trunked tusker falls when trapped
Within a pit, and breaks with tusks
The sides, and on the piled up earth
It steps, escapes, and joins its mate.

Some of the similes have more than one point of comparison.

The mingling of the waters of the Kaveri with those of the ocean
is described in the following double simile :

As the red sky meets the mountain dark,
As clings the child to its mother's breast,
So seem the ocean's waters clear

That mingle with the stream and roar
With mighty waves.

Here we have two points of comparison. One is closeness. The other is the resemblance of the dark ocean to the dark mountain, and the tawny river to the orange sky. Again, in the simile where the temple flag is compared to cane flowers, there are two points to be noticed. The flag is as white as the flower of the cane, and the white street is like the white sandy banks.

Sometimes poets are not content with merely bringing out the points of comparison, but go on elaborating and extending the passage in which the simile is contained, losing sight of the purpose of the comparison. Such similes serve not the purpose of elucidation only, but also of embellishment. Milton introduces many such similes. In this poem we have one such. The ladies of petals of

the merchant street are said to have fingers the *kanthal* flower, and not content with the

like the obvious

comparison, the poet goes on to describe these flowers and tells us that they grow on mountain slopes and diffuse their pollen in the air.

We note that the poet has a partiality similes. The fishermen wrestle ,

for astronomical

As stars that move in the blue expanse
Do mix with planets.

The ponds on whose banks grow flowers
Look like the moon when girt with stars
In a cloudless sky.
The customs officers are as prompt as
The horses of the hot sun-god
That draw his car.

Hyperbole when used within certain limits is an

admissible and attractive figure of speech. More modern Tamil poets have used this useful device in an extravagant and fantastic manner. Ancient poets, however, rarely indulged in it, and when they did, they kept it within limits. Our poet has used only one. In describing the much beflagged streets, he says:

The shadows cast by them prevent
The sun's rays shining in the town.

But such comparisons are used in our everyday speech. Similar exaggerated language is used when the *cunjee* water poured out of kitchens is said to flow like rivulets, and when Karikalan decorated with war garlands is said to look like a shrubby hill. The passage in which Karikalan is described in really hyperbolical language (11. 339-341) is not the poet's description about him, but the superstitious veneration in which he was held by the common people.

Ancient poets very rarely indulge in humour. In this poem we may call two statements somewhat humorous. When in speaking of the *Vanigars* the poet says that where they live "the fishes live in water, cattle occupy the land", he means that these live in security as the Vanigars are vegetarians. Speaking of women and their night revels, the poet says that they shun wine for sweeter drinks, evidently meaning sexual enjoyment.

VERSIFICATION AND LANGUAGE

There is an alternation of two kinds of metre in this poem: *asiriappa* and *vanchippa*. (For explanation of these metres, etc., see Introduction to *Pattupattu*). There are 138 lines of the former and 163 of the latter. Because of the preponderance of the *vanchippa* metre this poem has sometimes been called *Vanchi-nedumpattu*. The alternation of the two kinds of metre was presumably designed to avoid monotony.

The beauty of the versification, the melody and harmony of words, phrases, and lines cannot be brought out in a translation. These have to be studied and enjoyed in the original. There is a passage in this poem, for instance, (11. 179-180) which is highly onomatopoetic, the sound echoing the sense, the trans-

lation of which can be but a feeble attempt to reproduce therhythm of the original.

Nor can we bring out in English the terseness, of thought in pregnant words and phrases for which

the packing
these Idylls
are so justly famous.

As to language, there are 1,364 words in the poem of which 17 words: 16 Sanskrit and 1 Provincial, are foreign, and the
rest are of pure Tamil origin. So the foreign element two per cent. It will be found that later poems have a percentage of admixture of foreign words.

is only
greater

THE AUTHOR

The author of the poem is Uruthirankannanar, who evidently lived in the reign of Karikalan. He was a native of Kadyalur, as may be inferred from the fact that he was known as Kadyalur Uruthirankannanar. He probably belonged to the Brahmin caste, as the commentator of *Tholkappiam* in his notes on *Muppal* gives this name as an example of a Brahmin name. It is difficult to find out what his religion was. Those who say that he was a Saivite base it on the fact that Uruthira is the name of Siva. The name means one who is as dear to Siva as the eye, and was given to Saivites. Those who say that he was a Vaishnavite point out many references to Tirumal (Vishnu) in this poem and *Perumpanarttupadai*, another Idyll written by this poet. But then there are references to Muruga also, the god of

the Saivites. The poet had another patron, Ilanthirayan, of Kanchi. Apart from the fact that he led a happy life his wife, we do not know anything else about him.

king
with

DATE OF COMPOSITION

The question of the date when the poem was written bristles with difficulties. There is no doubt, however, that the poem belongs to the Sangham period. It is also fairly certain that it was one of the earliest of the ten Idylls. We may further infer that, judged by the rarity of Sanskrit words, and the comparatively few references to Aryan customs and religion, the poem must have been written before the third century A.D., to put it at the latest, when Aryan culture was beginning to spread in South India.

The date could be fixed more accurately if the date of Karikalan's reign could be ascertained. Till lately scholars thought that the reign was in the first century A.D. for the following reason. Kayavagu (in Pali Gajabahu), a king of Ceylon who ruled from 113 to 135 A.D., visited Senguttuvan, a Chera king,

according to *Silappathigaram*. The commentator of this Epic says that Senguttuvan was a grandson of a Chola king. From this some scholars jump to the conclusion that (1) Gajabahu of Ceylon visited Senguttuvan; (2) Senguttuvan was the grandson of Karikalan; and (3) allowing a priority in date of two generations for a grandfather, Karikalan must have lived somewhere about 70 A.D.

There are flaws in this argument. (1) The text of *Silappathigaram* says nothing of Senguttuvan's descent. It is only the commentator that lived long after the composition of the Epic that makes a reference to it. (2) Even the commentary does not say that Karikalan was the grandfather of the Chera king. It only says that it was a Chera king. (3) There is no way of identifying Gajabahu of Ceylon with the Kayavagu of the Epic. There is a further difficulty. There is an alternative reading to "Kayavagu" in the text of the Epic: "Kaval." There are objections to the early date. The Periplus and Pliny's works make no mention of such a great king, although these authors who lived in the seventies of the first century gave accurate information about the Tamil country. Another consideration that militates against the early date comes from epigraphical evidence. From an inscription in the Telugu country we learn that Karikalan took Kanchi from the Pallavas, and renovated it with gold. It has been proved that the Pallava power began to decline in 350 A.D. It is argued, therefore, that Karikalan conquered Kanchi after this date, and that of course he could not have lived in the first century.

All this leads us to the conclusion that there is not sufficient material for settling the exact period of the composition of the poem. We can only say with safety that it must have been written at least 1,500 years ago.

THE LOST SITE OF THE CITY

The great Chola capital is only a memory now. It has been wiped off the face of the earth, and its location is a matter of conjecture. A sandy

spot many miles south of Madras near
Mayavaram is pointed out as the probable location of this emporium. There is an interesting legend connected with the disappearance of the city. A Chola king had a son by a Naga princess of Ceylon. On an elder son dying, the king sent for this prince. He took ship at Manipallavam (Jaffna ?) to go to his father. On the way the ship in which he sailed was wrecked, and the passengers landed on an island. The prince was lost there, and when his father heard about it, he was so

overwhelmed with grief, that, neglecting the rites he had to
perform at the festival of Indra, he went in search of his son.
The god punished him by sending a tidal wave that the city.
submerged

The difficulty of identifying the site is increased by the fact that the river Kaveri has changed its course during the centuries.
The river is no more a broad and navigable river where it enters the sea. As the result of the construction of a dam the river breached its banks and formed a new branch known as Kollidam.
The waters of the old river are now shrunk into a small channel before it reaches the sea.* Such is
glory !
the transience of worldly

*Kanagasabai's "Tamils 1800 Years Ago."

PATTINAPALAI

Though Venus, star of splendour bright,
Strays southward from its wonted course,
Cool showers fail to fall, and the lark
That feeds on rain in silence droops,
Yet sea-like Kaveri mountain-fed
Its waters spread o'er golden sands.
The never failing fields extend
With green sweet cane and fragrant vats
That boil and make long water plants
Of neighbouring fields grow pale and fade.
Here under stores of grain do sleep

Grown calves fed sleek with yellow rice.
Rich coconut and plantain trees

With bunches, fruitful areca palms,
Sweet mangoes, bunchy palmyras,

And rooty *sempu*, saffron sweet,
And tender ginger : these abound.

On spacious fronts of houses wide
With shining foreheads, guileless looks,
Bejewelled maids scare fowls away
That come to feed on drying grains
By throwing pendants round and thick
Which bar the way of tiny cars
That horseless move upon three wheels
Which boys with golden anklets drive.
Save trifling brawls, no stirring hate
Disturbs the crowded coast town rich.

There gardens girt with loam are seen
Where pegs are driven to tie strong boats
That stand like steeds in stables tied,
Come fully laden with the grain
By barter bought of salt refined
Through Chola land extending wide
With many a hamlet closely set.

The groves are charming, rich in yield.
Beyond are gardens bright with flowers.
Long ponds are there with lofty banks
That look like the moon when girt with stars In a
cloudless sky. They shimmer bright
With a riot of gaudy tints that tinge
The fragrant flowers that edge the banks.
The ponds afford such joys as felt

In this our birth and in the next.

On folding doors is the tiger mark ;
On strong-built walls is Lakshmi's form.
From kitchens wide dispensing alms
That praise and lasting merit earns
Abundant flows like rivulets
The *cunjee* rich that's drained from rice.
To drink this bulls engage in fight
And muddy make the trampled ground.
The thick dust raised by running cars
Doth soil the various pictures drawn
On temples white, and make the bulls
Resemble elephants that roll
In lime. The sheds where bullocks feed
Have yards containing cooling tanks.
There hermitages too are seen.
The cuckoos with their great black mates
From shrubby groves do fly away
To shun the smoke of oblation's fire
That hermits bright with matted locks
Do light in demon-guarded shrines,
Not easy of access and grim,
To live with pebble-eating doves.

The fishers thrive on an evil trade.

They live close with their numerous kin
In wide, black, sandy mounds. There are Seen
wrestling grounds with ancient trees.
They eat sweet roasted shrimp, and feed
On turtles boiled. They wear the blooms
Of *adampu* dry that creeps on land
And *ambal* that in water grows.
As stars that move in the blue expanse
Do mix with planets, so the men
In ample commons mingle free,
And fight with hands and weapons so
That body touches body close.

PATTINAPALAI

31

In ire they yield not to the foe,
And unappeased with vigour fight.
The stones that fly from slings do scare
The birds that sit on dusky palms.

In the outskirts mud-walled wells are found,
Pigs with their young, and various fowls.
There rams with partridges do play.
Long fishing rods that lean against
The low-roofed huts resemble much
Memorial stones round which stand spears
And shields. In the centre nets are spread
To dry on sandy yards that seem

Like gloom with moonlight patches mixed.
Here red-haired fishers garlands wear
Of blossoms, cool and white, and vines
Beneath the pines with hanging roots.
They plant the sword of the gravid shark
To seat their sea-god great, for whom
They wear the bloom of sheath-ed pine,
And toddy drawn from rugged palms
They drink. Their women dark are clad
In green leaf garments, and with these
On full moon days, neglecting work,
Not fishing on the wide cold sea,
These men who live in sandy groves
That smell of fish do eat and play.
As the red sky meets the mountain dark,
As clings the child to the mother's breast,
So seem the ocean's waters clear
That mingle with the streams and roar
With mighty waves. Here people bathe
To cleanse their sins, and wash the salt

In waters fresh ; they play with crabs
And dabble in the moving waves.
They fashion puppets and enjoy
Delights that all the senses feel
With zest intense the whole day long.

The ancient glories of the port,
So blest with never-failing flowers,
Are rare, and match the pride of heaven.

In night's last watch, when eyes are tired,
The boatmen in their prow-bent crafts
Note well the lights that still burn bright.

In storeys high where artless dames
At night enjoyed their mates' embrace,
Discarding silks for raiment white.
They wear the garlands of their mates,
While men, the garlands of their wives,
And wine they shun for sweeter drinks.
Asleep they all are now who heard
The lyrics sung, enjoyed the plays,
And felt the joys of the moon-lit night.

Reclining on the shining sands
That scented with sweet-smelling blooms
By great Kaveri brought along,
The good king's servants take their rest

And guard his goods in store-rooms built
On spacious streets that skirt the sea
With screw-pines bearing white blooms edged. Prompt
as the hot sun-god's fast steeds
That draw his car, they daily do
Their work with care and levy dues.
As, when the rainy season comes,
The copious waters drawn by clouds
Are shed on mountain tops and these
In turn flow down and fill the sea,
So goods flow in from sea to land,
And also flow from land to sea.
Unmeasured are the abundant wares
Here brought and piled. And watchmen strong
In depots guarded well do seal
These with the potent tiger mark.
They pile in yards these bundled heaps
Of wares immense. Upon these play
Big bulls whose legs are bent like those
Of sharp-clawed dogs, and rams. And these
Resemble stags that leap about
On bamboo slopes of cloud-capped hills.

In cloud-topped, lofty, storeyed halls
Around which there are pials built
Are numerous courts and doors, both large
And small, and spacious cloisters reached
By ladders long with close-set steps.
In them do gather women fair
Whose feet are pink, whose thighs, close-set.
Adorned are they with gauds of gold.

Their hips are broad, their dress is soft ;
Fair are their skins red-coral like.
Arrayed are they like peacocks gay.
Their eyes are deer-like, and their speech,
Like the parrot's prattle ; these enjoy
The breeze that through the windows blows.
They worship with bejewelled hands
Resembling clusters that do sprout

From *kanthal's* joints whose blooms do spread
Their pollens sweet on mountain slopes.

Wide is the street where people trade.
Here festivals are always held.
Harmonious with the dances wild
Of frenzied maids by the Red god stirred,
The flutes do pipe, the lyres do twang,
The drums roll loud, and the tabors sound.

There is the flag at the temple's gate
With blossoms decked, and sacred held
To perfect, glorious God, adored
By all. Again, a banner waves
As white as flowers of shapely canes

That grow along the river wild
Which in its course brings pearly sands.
This flag is fixed on curv-ed bars
Attached to poles that are well-greased
With soft and molten wax ; it stands
O'er baskets locked, with various kinds
Of tasty victuals filled, on which
White rice is as oblation strewn.
Where disputations sound are held
By scholars ripe who speak with power
As masters skilled in various lore,
Another imposing flag is hung.
There wave fine flags on tops of masts
Of ships that ride at anchor moored
In Pugar's port like tuskers huge
Which shake the pegs to which they're tied.
The gates of toddy shops have flags
As sign of sale, where drinkers come
In numbers, and the noisy yard
Where fish and meat are fried is heaped
With sand, and with flower gifts is strewn. So many other flags do wave

Of various hues along with these
That shadows cast by them prevent
The sun's rays shining in the town.

The good and worthy gods protect
The city's limits. Here are brought
Swift, prancing steeds by sea in ships,
And bales of pepper black, by carts.
Himalayas sends gems and gold,
While Kudda hills, sweet sandal-wood
And *akhil ;* pearls from the south sea come, Red coral
from the eastern sea.
The Ganges and the Kaveri bring
Their yield ; Ceylon provides its food,
And Burma, manufactures rare.
With other rare and rich imports
This wealth lies close and thickly piled,
Confused along the spacious streets.

Where merchants live the fish is safe
In the sea, and the cattle, in the land.
Quite free and happy are their lives
Amidst their multiplying kin.
They know no foes ; the fishes play
Near the fishers' quarters unafraid,
And cattle multiply untouched
In butchers' haunts. The merchants thus
Condemn the taking of these lives.
They tolerate not thieving vile.
They do their duties by the gods,
Oblations offer, tend with care

Fine bulls and cows, exalt the priests
That teach the Vedas four ; they give
Their guests food cooked and uncooked too
Unstintingly they dispense alms,
And live a life of gracious love.
The long yoke of their curv-ed plough
Is balanced with a central pin ;
E'en so their hearts are poised and just.
They speak the truth and deem it shame
To lie. For others' goods they have
The same regard as for their own
In trade. Nor do they try to get
Too much in selling their own goods,
Nor give too little when they buy,

They set a fair price on all things.
Their ancient wealth was thus acquired.
It's here the merchants crowded live.

As those who are united close
By various cultures high, at times
Together come to ancient shrines,
So people speaking diverse tongues
That come from great and foreign homes
Mix free in friendly terms with those
Who occupy this glorious town.

If ever such a place be given
As gift, I will not go from her
Whose jewels glitter, and whose hair
Is dark and long. Farewell, O heart!

Like the tiger's cub whose claws are sharp,
That grows imprisoned in a cage,
The Chola king grows proud and hard
Confined in fetters by his foes.
As a long-trunked tusker falls when trapped
Within a pit, and breaks with tusks
The sides, and on the piled up earth
He steps, escapes, and joins his mate,
So planning his escape with care,
The king doth scale his foemen's walls,
Unsheathes his sword, regains his crown,
And not content with this escape,
He marches with his tuskers huge
That pull the foemen's ramparts down,
That break their gates with powerful tusks,
And trample down with sharp-hoofed paws
The dark crowned heads of kings in dust.
With horses too adorned with bells
He longs to fight. As sign of war,
Adorned with various blossoms thick,
He looks a hill with shrubs o'ergrown.
Before him fall his valiant foes,

And kites in the wide sky circling fly.
His drums' sides look like demon's eyes,

And roaring shake the great wide camp.
He routs his foes at the first onset
In the battle-field. He does yet more.
Advancing into fertile lands,
He drives the owners from their homes.

The spacious tanks round which once grew
The blossom white of the sugar-cane,
The yellow rice, the lily long
With petals black, and *neythal* bloom,
And where the crocodile revelled,
Are now o'ergrown with *argu* thick
And *korai* grass. The fields and tanks
Made waterless are so confused
That stags with rugged horns with hinds
Now freely leap about the place.
Where stood God's emblem in the hall
For common worship meant, whose floor
The captive maid did smear and deck
With flowers, and at night fall did light
Unquenching lamps, and where did rest
The stranger, there the elephant
Now living with its mate doth lean
On columns that are tall and huge,
And make them slant with pond'rous weight.
The streets where festivals were held

With precious, fragrant blossoms strewn,
Where expert minstrels played on drums
Attuned to lyres of twisted strings
Well strung and sweet to hear, is now
Much shunned, and filled with flow'ring thorns
And *argu* grass. The jackal shrieks
And howls; the owl's sad hoot is heard;
The bittern whoops; dread goblin crowds
And female ghouls that corpses eat
With hair dishevelled fill the place.
The city once was rich in milk;
In upper rooms with arches propped
Were halls where guests in numbers came,
And kitchens that supplied rich feasts;
The white-walled houses had high seats
Whence parrots prattled honied words.
But now the hunter leather-shod
Comes here with drum and curv-ed bow
And steals the stores; from empty bins
The bent-billed owl in daylight hoots.

He ruins thus the hamlets fair
Whose walls are strongly fortified,
And wipes out those that lived in them.
E'en then he is not satisfied.

PATTINAPALAI

37

So strong his will to carry out
His aim without defeat, that one

Would think that he could mountains move,
Fill up the sea, bring down the sky,

And make the moving air stand still.
The Oli chiefs submit with fear,
Old Arva kings his service seek ;
The northern kings grow pale, and those
Of Coorg grow faint, and Pandy's king
Is scared, when anger rouses him.
Possessed of strength to overthrow
The strongholds that are held by kings
With valiant troops of power and zeal

And daring prowess in the field,
When anger makes his red eyes blaze,
The line of minor shepherd kings
And Irungoval's race he wrecks.

Where forests were, now hamlets rise.
He deepens tanks, makes rich the land
Expands Urunthai where are seen
High mansions, makes secure its shrines
And people, builds gates small and large,
And places quivers by the side
Of figured mantlets on the walls.
If he declares that he would fight,
He would not turn his back and change
His mind. He is entrenched secure

Within strong walls where Lakshmi sits.
The glory of the kings who come
With well-strapped drums is dimmed
In the great walls' shining light. He wears Bright
gems that decked the crowns of kings. And on his legs
are anklets large and fair.

The crimson paste rubbed on his chest
Is now worn off by frolics wild
Of his gold-bangled children dear,
And by the full breasts of his wives
Who are with well-wrought jewels decked.

This is the mighty Chola king
Adorned with radiant ornaments
Who lion-like works woe on his foes.

The lonely way more dreadful seems
Than javelins aimed against his foes.
Her broad and tender shoulders feel
E'en sweeter than his sceptered sway.

NOTES

1-17. Description of the sea-coast tract of the Chola land.

2. *strays southward.* It was supposed that Venus was a sign of drought. Cf. *M. Kanchi*, l. 101.

slanting southward

5. *sea-like Kaveri.* The usual explanation is the sea.

Kaveri that falls into

11. *stores.* Bins made of clay and covered with was stored.

straw in which grain

12. Did they allow cattle to eat the crop? allow fowls to eat the grain (l. 20).

They evidently did not

22. *throwing pendants.* A proof of their wealth.

28. Here begins the description of the city.

32. *barter* was the system of trade. Money does not used in those days.

seem to have been

43. *in the next* (birth). Rudimentary belief in life

after death. See

Introduction : Religion. Cf. *P. A. Padai*, l. 76.

44. *tiger mark.* It was the custom of the kings to put on their gates. The tiger was the mark of the Chola king.

their marks

44-65. Description of alms-houses, monasteries, etc.

45. *Lakshmi.* Aryan goddess of wealth.

46-58. We have in these lines a description of Buddhist

and Jain monas-

teries. This shows that the influence of these religions

had began to be
felt in the Tamil land.

49. *cunjee.* The abundance of rice water denotes the large amount of
rice cooked.

56. *bullocks.* Probably old and sickly ones
monks. The Jains had hospitals for animals.

taken care of by the

61. *oblations.* They are offered by Aryan *rishis.*

63. *guarded shrines.* Kali's shrines.

66-82. Fishermen and their sports.

71. *wear the blossoms.* People wore garlands on all festive occasions,

83-85. Outcaste quarters.

83. *mud-walled wells.* The inside of these
wells were covered with
baked clay instead of being built with stones.

85. *ram and partridges do play.* Probably this is a
and cock fighting.

reference to ram

83-115. The fishermen's quarters.

88. *memorial stones.* An old custom of honouring
the vivid simile.

dead heroes. Note

91-92. Another suggestive simile.

96. *to seat their sea-god.* A primitive form of worship.

98. *toddy.* This was offered to the god first, and
The frequent mention of toddy in this and other poems
generally in use.
drunk afterwards.
shows that it was
Nachinarkiniar explains உண்டு as drinking toddy made of

rice.

105-109. For the double simile see Introduction.

110. *cleanse their sins.* This belief has persisted from
Cf. *M. Kanchi*, l. 468.
primitive times

113. *puppets.* Probably dolls made of grass.

116-118. These lines are inserted between this section
117. *never-failing flowers.* Probably an
and the next. city of flowers, as the capital was called.

allusion to Poompattinam, the

119-130. Night revelries.

124. *silks.* The women of the upper classes wore
factured garments, while women of the lower classes
of leaves and flowers.

silk and other manu-
wore garments made

127. Note the sly humour. Women do not drink wine as they have better enjoyments. Some think that the line means that they shun ordinary toddy, and prefer wines that could excite their passions.

129. *lyrics.* Simple ballads. *plays.* Probably

pantomimes.

131-156. The Customs.

138. *hot sun-god.* An image found in all literatures.

141-144. A drawn-out simile. See Introduction.

155. *stag.* The word in Tamil is *varuda*, a mythical stag
eight legs.

said to have

157-180. Traders' street.

162-174. Description of female beauty. See

Introduction.

172-174. Note the fine simile. See Introduction.

173. *kanthal.* This
flower with Tamil poets.

is usually called the November flower, a favourite
It is referred to in *Pattupattu* a number of times.

178. *red god.* Muruga. The worship of Muruga was the most prevalent religion of the time. *T. M. A. Padai* describes his various hill shrines in South India. Later he was identified with the son of Siva.

179-180. These two lines in the
They also give us an idea of the musical

original are highly onomatopoetic.
instruments used in ancient worship.

181-210. The flag-decked street.

181. This flag was attached to the *Sthupasthanam*.

185-187. Note the points of the simile. See Introduction.

193. *white rice . . . oblation.* An interesting old ceremony.

195. *scholars ripe.* Probably Aryan scholars. ll. 169-170 of the Tamil text appear also in *Maduraikanchi*, ll. 760-761.

209-210. The only extravagant simile in the Poem.

211-224. The trade of the city. See Introduction.

213. *steeds.* These were probably brought from Burma.

214. *carts.* The word in the Tamil text means a roller, and by metonymy a cart to which it is attached.

216. *Kudda hills.* Hills west of the city, probably Pothia hills.

217. *pearls from the South sea.* Perhaps from the shores of Ceylon, or it may be from the sea near the port of Korkai.

220-221. *Ceylon . . . Burma.* *Izham* (ஈழம்) and *Kazhagam* (காழகம்) in the Tamil text.

225-252. Vanigars' (merchants) quarters. One of the most interesting passages of the poem. It gives us an insight into the high ideals of ancient Tamils. The Vanigars belonged to the Vysya caste and engaged themselves not only in trade, but also in farming and herding sheep. Here presumably they were engaged in commerce, the great business of the seaport. Vanigars are expected to do six duties, and the poet shows that they carried them out. See Introduction. Another interpretation is that Vanigars belonged to the Vellala caste.

225-226. An indirect way of saying that they were vegetarians. Probably in this and other virtues they were influenced by Buddhist and Jain ideals.

239. *Food cooked and uncooked.* There were two ways of feeding: one is to give raw provisions, and the other to give cooked food. This line is also explained as eatables and freshly cooked rice.

250. *sell.* Barter.

254-260. Ordinarily these people were exclusive, but on
-sions they came together.
festival occa-

257-259. The city was cosmopolitan.

261-264. The *agam* or love element of the poem is deftly inserted here. The remaining portion of this element is removed to the end. See General Introduction to *Pāttupattu : Agām* and *Puram*.

265-293. Karikalan's prowess.

268. Karikalan was a posthumous son. Enemies seized his throne when he was a child. See *P. A. Padai.*

269-272. A long drawn-out simile. See Introduction.

284. Kings and generals were wont to wear appropriate garlands when they went to war. The flower of the Chola king was *vahai,* that of the Pandya was the neem, and that of the Chera was the palmyra.

285. Somewhat of a hyperbole.

288. A striking simile. The sides of the drum have black spots in the centre, and white and black rings round them.

294-333. A splendid descriptive passage bringing out vividly and graphically the condition of towns and fields before and after Karikalan's invasion.

301. *waterless.* Victorious kings in those times usually deprived the conquered of a free water supply.

304. *God's emblem.* The *kandu* (pillar) was worshipped by all. See Introduction.

305-306. *maid, etc.* Incidentally we are made to understand that slave girls captured in war were treated well, as they had the privilege of assisting at sacred places.

307. *with flowers.* It was a custom to decorate the floor smeared with cow dung with flowers.

330. *hunter.* An Eyina of a hunting tribe.

333. Owls hoot only in the night, but the desolation of the place is so great that they are said to hoot during the day-time also.

340-342. The hyperbole is not the poet's. It expresses the superstitious veneration in which the king was held.

343-354. For an account of the kings mentioned here see

Introduction.

357. *expanded Uranthai.* Some commentators explain உறந்தைபோக்கி as giving up Uranthai. No doubt Karikalan did at one time give up this city and chose Kaveripattinam as his capital, but this explanation does not suit the context.

361. *figured mantlets.* Movable screens serving as attack. They were made artistically.

protection against

371-375. Note the human touch. The poet seems to dreaded warrior had, after all, a human side to his character.

say that this. 376. Note that the hero of the *agam* is that of the *puram* is named.

not mentioned by name, but

379-382. The sundered part of the *agam* is brought in

here.

PORUNARATTUPADAI

PORUNARATTUPADAI

INTRODUCTION

NAME

Porunarattupadai means a poem giving guidance to a *porunan* or bard. The poet represents himself as a bard who received the bounty of a famous king. (For explanation of *porunan* and *attupadai* see General Introduction to *Pattupattu: Attupadai*).

SUBJECT MATTER

The poet represents himself as meeting a wandering minstrel and his wife, the latter of whom he describes at length dwelling on her physical features. He congratulates the minstrel on his good fortune in meeting him, as he is in a position to direct him to King Karikalan who is a patron of bards, and goes on to describe at length the way in which he was treated: the friendly welcome accorded to him, the kind of food and clothing given, and the various valuable gifts he received from the king. Then he describes the glories of the king, his prowess, his benign rule, and the fertility of his kingdom. One special feature of his kingdom, viz., the inclusion of the four different kinds of regions, into which the ancient writers divided land, is very vividly set forth.

SOCIAL LIFE

As in the case of the other Idylls, we can glean some facts about the life of ancient Tamils in this poem. We have a detailed description of the *yal* used in those times. The *yal* used by the bard in this poem has seven strings, as may be seen from the poet addressing the bard as "master of seven strings." There were other *yals* that had double and treble the number of strings, according to other poems. The minstrel also used a small drum. Dancing was one of the fine arts encouraged at that time.

The songstress seems to have been quite naked, as otherwise her whole body could not have been described. This does not mean, however, that clothing was never used. We are told that among the gifts given to the wife of the bard was a garment with floral designs that looked like the skin of serpents. Women

wore garlands and costly ornaments too, such as necklaces of pearls and gold.

Ancient Tamils were not vegetarians. Vegetarianism was a later introduction with the advent of Buddhism. According to this poem the king provided his guests with the flesh of rams and deer, and fish. Toddy was abundantly supplied. Honey and sweet cakes are mentioned. Of course people ate rice, and the rice-fields of the Chola country are described picturesquely. The poem mentions *aval* or roasted rice.

We may infer that women of the period had a free social life, and enjoyed themselves sporting in the river.

There is a fine description of a tall chariot with

top drawn by four milk-white

a cone-shaped interesting custom of speeding

him seven paces.

horses, and the mention of the the parting guest by going with in

The most important reference to the account of Karikala Cholan.

the life of the time is found

We have a good account of him in *Pattinapalai* too. (See Introduction to that poem). Here we are told that he was Ilayon's son, that he inherited the throne before he was born, that he conquered the Chera and Pandya kings at a single pitched battle, that he was victorious over his foes even when he was a mere stripling, that he ruled with wisdom, justice, and power, and that kings trembled before him.

Religion

There is not much information in this poem as regards religion. There is a reference to a jungle deity, probably Kali. Karikalan's anger is said to resemble Muruga's ire. Muruga is the war-god of the Tamil land. There is a reference to the red rice offering to crows as a religious ceremonial which, it is interesting to note, is practised even at the present day in the Tamil country. The reference to *rishis* and the good deeds done in a previous birth shows that Aryan influences had begun to penetrate the Tamil land. However, we cannot be quite sure that the Transmigration theory was exclusively Aryan. There is an ancient Tamil word, *ool*, or karma, which shows that there was at least a glimpse of this theory before Aryan times. (See for further remarks Introduction to *Kurinchipattu:* Religion).

LITERARY MERITS

Pen-Pictures As in the other Idylls, we have some splendid pen-pictures in this poem. In fact, the whole poem may be said to be one stretch of pen-pictures. To select a few, the poem starts with a picture of the ancient lute. (See below under Similes). The next picture is

that of the songstress. All the parts of her body are described in a detailed and vivid manner. (See below under Similes). Another picture that gives great distinction to the poem is the description of the Chola land which is said to contain the four out of the five varieties of regions into which poets divided lands for poetic purposes. (See General Introduction on *Agam* and *Puram*). It may be explained that *palai* region was excluded, as there was no desert land in the Chola country. It was so extensive and varied that all the fauna and flora, and the natural advantages of the four different kinds of regions were found in Karikalan's kingdom. The poet does not merely deal in generalities. He gives us striking pictures. When, for instance, he speaks of the *marutham* (fertile) region, he gives us the names of the trees, plants, flowers, birds, and animals that are found there, and the things that are produced there for sale. In the *neithal* (sea-coast) land " the large owl shrieks ", and the peacocks dance

> Well keeping time with the music of the bees
> With plumage spread out in the sands as white
> As bright moonlight.

We have the following description of the fields watered by the Kaveri :

The farmers with their sickles bend to reap
Their harvests, pile rice sheaves in immense stacks,
Heap daily the grain threshed out that look like hills,
And store it in huge bins enclosed in straw.

The following is a striking picture of a peahen:

The timid peahen sits
On bending *kanchi* and *marutham* trees
And, having eaten of green *pagal* fruits
And jak's red pulps, doth loudly shriek.

Nature

There are not many gorgeous descriptions of Nature as are found, for instance, in *Nedunalvadai*. The following passage shows how the poet observed and appreciated Nature:

E'en at a time when the sun . . .
Burns up the *kullai* plants and boughs of trees,
Dries up the mountain streams, makes massy clouds
Forget to drink the ocean's water up,
And causes drought, thus bringing adverse times,
The Kaveri ceases not to flow.

The picture of the harvesting in fields already quoted is a fine description of Nature. Another instance is the picture of the crow eating the red rice offering made by those who live in " shady groves of bending coconut trees " and reserving " for future use

the tortoise brood that lies under the *notchi* tree."

Like all ancient poets our poet is a great lover of flowers.

He weaves into the poem nine different kinds of flowers. Twelve

different kinds of trees are mentioned, and five kinds of animals.

A very noticeable feature of the poem is that we meet similes

at every turn. The following are instances

Imagery: Similes

that which is evident

of elaborate similes. The harmony produced by the songstress is compared to

when

The three great kings, possessing riches great,

Renown widespread, strong enterprise, and troops

With war-drums, jointly meet in regal state.

Again, the king's victory over his powerful enemies, when

he was but a stripling, is compared to the young whelp of the lion, before it ceases to feed at its dam's breasts, pouncing upon elephants and killing them. Here the young king is compared to the lion's whelp, and his big enemies, to elephants; and his valour while young, to the lion killing the elephant at the first hunt. The progress of the young king in the art of government is compared to the progress of the warm young sun mounting up the sky increasing in its heat. Here the points of comparison are the brilliance of the young king and his increasing power as time went on.

There are two strings of similes in the poem. The one is about the lute. Its head is like "deer's smooth hoof." The

leather cover is as " red as a lamp's bright flame"; its surface is " like stomach fair with the ordered hair of a fair new pregnant dame"; the eyelets fastening the leather cover is bound with pins resembling "the eyes of crabs that live in holes"; an opening on the drum is like "the crescent moon on its eighth day," or like "the mouth without its uvula"; its handle looks like "the cobra's hood outspread"; the bands round the handle resemble "pretty bangles worn by women dark"; the strings resemble "grains of millet husked"; and, in general, the lute "looks like a bride bedecked." The other strings of similes relates to the wife of the bard. Each part of the body has an appropriate comparison. Her eyebrows are arched like "death-dealing bows"; her lips are like "petals of *ilava* blooms"; her teeth are like "a row of pearls"; her shoulders look like "the waving bamboo smooth"; her ear-lobes resemble "well-shaped loops of scissors"; her fingers are like "the petals of the *kanthal* blooms"; her finger nails are like "parrots' bills"; her navel is like "water-ripples"; the belt of many beads that adorns her hips "seem the seat of bees"; her thighs resemble "thick-set trunks of huge elephants"; and (this is the best of all) her

small feet resemble "tongues of panting dogs." Further, the ground on which the songstress walks is "as red as vermilion." She rests under the leafless branches of the *mara* tree whose shade is "net-like."
unbroken grains of

The songstress looks like a pea-hen. The
cooked rice resemble *mullai* buds. The
leaves of the neem are "saw-edged." The poet seeks the palace of the king like a "bird that seeks a tree of ripe fruits." The poet's bones soften like "melting wax." The floral designs on

the dress resemble skins of serpents. The teeth of the poet are blunted like ploughshares used in fallow lands. The legs of elephant calves resemble drums. The anger of the king is like

that of Muruga. The king's yearning look is like that of a cow after its calf. The sands on which the peacock struts are as bright as moonlight. The spotted sides of the drum resemble spots on the cobra's hood.

There is
to renounce

only one hyperbole in this poem. Robbers are said
their work when they hear the music of the *yal*.
Besides this there are a few exaggerations such as we use in every day speech. The waist of the songstress is said to be almost invisible, and unable to support her body. The rice-stacks look like hills. The body of the poet smeared with fragrant paste attracting bees is only a humorous touch.
of the songstress' body agitating men's

As to the beauty-spots
minds, it may not be
far from the truth in the case of not a few men. The teeth of the meat-eater being blunted, as ploughshares are, is another touch of humour.

THE AUTHOR

The author of the poem is Mudatthamakanniar, which literally means the lame wearer of garlands. It is probably a nickname. We do not know much about him. We may infer that he was a contemporary of Karikalan whom and from whom he received great gifts. Some

he describes,
critics think
that the poet was a woman.

DATE OF COMPOSITION

As probably the poet is a contemporary of Karikalan, the date of the composition of the poem depends on the date of that king's reign. A discussion of this question will be found in the Introduction to *Pattinapalai*. It is generally agreed that this poem is one of the earliest, probably the earliest, of the Ten Idylls. As the early life of Karikalan is mentioned here, and there is no mention of his imprisonment, we may consider this as the earliest of the Ten Idylls.

VERSIFICATION

The Poem is mostly written in the *asiriappa* metre with the *vanchippa* coming in at intervals. (For a description of these metres see General Introduction to *Pattupattu :* Versification).

O minstrel! Thou art wise enough to move
To places new, as thou art cloyed with the rice
Thou hast enjoyed at recent festivals
In great wide hamlets of continued thrift.

Thy wife's *yal* has a head whose middle part
Is raised like a fork resembling deer's smooth hoof.
It has a leather cover fastened tight,
Red-coloured like the bright flame of a lamp.
It looks like the stomach fair with ordered hair
Of a comely dame in early pregnancy.
The ends are bound with pins like the eyes of crabs
That hide in holes. Like a crescent eight days old Of
a uvulaless mouth is an opening made
On it. Its handle black looks like the hood
Of cobra spread out. Round it close and strong
Are bands resembling pretty bangles worn
By women dark. The faultless strings on which
She plays resemble grains of millet husked,
And made and set to bring out music sweet.
The shapely *yal* looks like a bride adorned,
And as though there the goddess has her seat.
The robbers that the travellers' path obstruct
Their wicked ways renounce, and drop their tools
When they well listen to its music sweet.

Thy wife plays sweetly songs that tuneful are
And worded well. She now doth sweep the strings
With a single finger; now she slides o'er them
With her fore-finger and the thumb; and now
She sounds them back and forth; now twangs them sharp.
Her tresses dark are like black river sands.

Her eye-brows like death-dealing bows are arched.
Her cool eyes shaded are with graceful lids,
Her lips that utter tuneful words are red

Like petals of *ilava* blooms. Her teeth
Are white and faultless like a row of pearls.
Her ears on which her pendants dangling shine
Resemble well-shaped loops of scissors used
To trim the hair. Her shapely neck is bent
With modesty. Her shoulders wide look like
The waving bamboo smooth. Soft hair doth grow
Upon her hand. Her fingers slim are like
The petals of the *kanthal* blooms that grow
On tops of lofty hills. Like parrot bills
Her shining dainty finger nails appear.
Her heaving, young fair breasts are overspread
With beauty spots that agitate men's minds,
And set so close that a nib could not them part.
Like water ripple is her navel fair.
Her slender waist could not it seems sustain
Her body, and is scarcely visible.
A belt of many beads adorn her hips
That seem the seat of bees. Her thighs are round
And closely set resembling thick-set trunks
Of huge she-elephants. Her small, fair feet
Resemble tongues of panting dogs and suit
Her smooth-haired ankles well. As, when she walks

On stony ground as red as vermilion,
Her feet are blistered much and seethe with boils
That look like *maral* fruits that are mature,
She does not travel in the noon-day sun.
These are the traits of the worthy female bard
Who has the pea-hen's looks.

She stays in jungles where the elephant
Doth daily wander stepping, as it were,
To the songs she sings. She bears her troubles great
While she takes rest beneath the net-like shades
Of leafless *mara* trees, and offers prayers
To the god that in the jungle has his seat.
Her *yal* produces harmony so grand
That it reminds one of the stately scene

Where three great kings, possessing riches great,
Renown widespread, strong enterprise, and troops
With war-drums, jointly meet in regal state.

O chief of bards whose songs have value great !
It is the fruit of good deeds done by thee
In a former birth that made thee meet me here,

PORUNARATTUPADAI

53

Nor miss the proper way in ignorance.
If thou dost wish to stay thy hunger great
That thou and kindred thine have suffered long,
Arise without delay and be well blessed,
O master of the seven-stringed *yal* !

Like a bird that seeks a tree of ripe fruits full
I sought the portals great of the ramparts wide
Resonant with loud sounds that open free
To those who much desire to enter them.

I went within without due leave to fill
My needs. My weary body felt relieved,
And I sang keeping time with the double beat
Of drums whose broad sides mottled were by use
Resembling marks on the cobra's spotted hood.
The morning star arose and widely spread
Its rays in the early morning's darkness thick.
The king desired to treat me as a friend,
And welcomed me so as to make me wish
To always beg from him for help, and thus
Give him a chance to do his bounteous deeds.

He placed me near him that he might me keep
In sight. He looked at me with longing eyes
As though he feasted on me. So I felt
My bones quite soften like the melting wax.
My clothes that teemed with nits and lice, and wet
With sweat, and patched much, he did take away
And gave me clothes whose texture was so fine
Its threads could not be easily traced, and worked
With floral forms resembling skins of snakes.
In the halls bejewelled, smiling, comely maids
Poured out from spotless golden vessels full
Like cheering rain much stupefying drink
Repeatedly. Then to my heart's content
I drank that I might soothe my weariness,
And rested in the wealthy palace grand
With joy at eve. Like *rishis* that enjoy
Devotion's fruits by taking proper care
Of their own body's health, I took good care
To rid me of the journey's weariness.
When I arose from sleep, I trembled much.
The cause was not distress, but too much drink.
Those who had seen me poor the previous eve
Much wondered when they noted me next morn
So full of scent that I attracted bees.

My mind that thought all this a dream rejoiced
To find it true. Those who were poor like me
Were greatly pleased, and raw boys too observed
This change in me.

Inviting urgently, he welcomed us,
And after we had paid him our respects
In due course, more than once he pressed us much
To eat the well-cooked haunches thick of rams
That feed on twists of grass. We ate this meat,
Which we did cook and roast upon iron spits,
By changing it from one side of the mouth
To the other, and were cloyed by eating much.
Then seating us he brought us various cakes,
While maids with tuneful *yals* and bright foreheads
Danced keeping time to the sound of charming drums.
We spent our days imbibing sweet drinks much.
One day the king begged us to eat cooked rice
Whose grains unbroken looked like *mullai* buds
That are arranged like fingers in a row.
I bolted curries mixed with roasted seeds
That swelled my throat ; such was my daily fare.
My teeth quite lost their edge by eating meat
Much day and night, as ploughshares blunted are
By being used in fallow lands. As I
Continued eating much. I loathed my food.

One day we gently said, " O king renowned
That tribute dost from rebel foes exact !
We wish to go back to our village homes."
He asked us vexed, with seeming angry look,
" Would you in haste give up this plenty here ? "
Yet he did give me mated elephants
As gifts, and calves whose legs resemble drums
That shamble in their walk. He gave me gifts
That are of worth according to his means,
And I took what I wished to fill my needs.
Thus I have come relieved of my distress.

The king is Ilayon's son who is famed
For his victorious spear and chariots tall,
So many and superb. A dreaded chief
He is, whose anger is like Muruga's ire.
The throne was his by right when he was still
In the mother's womb. The foes that knew not first

His prowess now obeyed him, and the states
That failed to carry out the king's commands
Became confounded. As the warm young sun
That spreads on the sea its rays and brings in day
Doth make its gentle progress through the sky,
From childhood, e'en when he began to crawl,
He made his kingdom day by day grow great
And prosperous, and, more potent than the god
Of death, he bore it on his shoulders great
And glorious. As the lion's whelp doth pursue
The deer, ere it is weaned from the mother's teats
And kills an elephant with sudden spring
The first time it goes out to seek its prey,
The handsome Karikalan decked with wreaths
With awful mien and daring enterprise
Defeated at a single battle fought
At Venni's field two powerful kings whose heads
Were crowned with wreaths : one woven from the blooms
Of the palmyra ; the other from the leaves,
Saw-edged and pretty, of the dark-branched neem.

If drawing near, and at his gracious feet
Thou dost pay homage, and before him stand,
He would look at thee with his longing eyes
And wish to lessen thy distress, as a cow
Yearns after her own calf. Before he knows
Thy skill, he would without delay, remove
Thy patched up clothes that are as full of dirt
As roots of moss, and substitute for them
Clean silken garments that have knotted ends,
And urge thee to thy heart's content to eat
From costly golden plates. So thou wilt drink
Day after day strong toddy scented well
Supplied without stint. Thou wilt proudly wear
The flame-like lotus blooms, whose petals are

Not Nature's, on thy dark and knotted locks.
Thy wife will wear a threadless necklace fine

And also strings of white and shining pearls.
He will then make thee mount a chariot tall
Crowned with an ivory top shaped like a cone,
With milk-white horses four attached to it,
Whose frenzied heads do sway, whose red manes

shake, On whom the riding-whip need not be used.
He will then follow thee for spaces seven.
He will give thee the gifts superior bards

Deserve. He will too give thee tracts of land
Containing many settled hamlets fair
Surrounded by well-watered fertile lands.
He will thee grant fine elephants as gifts
Whose trunks are curved and thick, and which do march
With ire to the sound of drums at furious speed.
He ceases not to do kind deeds, and spends

His income giving gifts to others free.
If thou dost wish to bring to a sudden end

Thy call, he will be vexed, unwilling quite
To let thee go. But he will farewell bid
When he doth ponder on this transient world.

In this part of our wide world, which the shores
Of oceans dark with trembling waves surround,
Are fields extensive spotted with rice-bins.
The red rice offerings made by those who live
In shady groves of bending coconut trees
Is eaten by the black crow which, when cloyed,
Reserves for future use the tortoise brood
That lies below the *notchi* tree that stands

Next to their homes. The youth indulge in sports.
Their elders end disputes when they attend
The royal court. The timid peahen sits

On bending *kanchi* and *marutham* trees,
And, having eaten of green *pagal* fruits
And jak's red pulps, doth loudly shriek.

If those who live in fertile lands dislike
To live in rural parts where tillers' noise
In cutting sugar-canes and reaping rice
Is loudly heard, and where are found
The *adampu* that doth grow in regions dry
The spreading *pahanrai*, the *punga* tree
With tender leaves, the sprouting *gnanal* groves,
And other trees, then they would leave their homes
For lands where grow the blooming *thalavi*,
The spreading *thonrai*, the *mullai* with its buds,
The flowering *theru*, the *konrai* golden-bloomed,
The *kaya* that has sapphire-tinted blooms
Again, if they dislike this lonely life,
They go back to their former fertile lands.
The cranes that feed on shrimps in leaden seas
By sharks infested, are afraid to sit
On *punnai* trees because of noisy waves,
And fly to rest on stalks of palmyras.

The fishers on the sea-coast lands where grow
The bunchy coconut and the plantain tree,
The *kanthal* rich, and the *naga* tree on which
The large owl shrieks, and where the peacocks dance,
Well keeping time with the music of the bees
With plumage spread out on the sands as white
As bright moonlight, move out to forest lands.
Those selling honey and roots eatable
Exchange them for the fish's fat and wine
They barter sugar-cane and roasted rice
For toddy and deer flesh. The fisher folk
Sing hillmen's songs, while hillmen garlands wear
Of fragrant blooms that grow along the coast.
The dwellers of the desert sing the songs
Of those in fertile lands, and these in turn
Praise forest lands where grows the *mullai* blue.
The wild fowl eats rice, while the domestic fowl
Eats millet grain. The hillside monkey rolls
In salty marsh, while cranes that take a bath
In briny sea-waves rest themselves on hills.
Four diverse pleasant regions are thus found
Together in a single realm.

Hail! King without a stain whom all accept,
Sole ruler of the world who hast with love
So long held sway, reputed in thy reign
To rule with virtue great combined with strength,

That art the lord victorious with thy spear,
Before whom kings do tremble, prosper thou!

E'en at a time when the sun that gives all light
And spreads its glorious rays out far and wide,

Burns up the *kullai* plants and boughs of trees,
Dries up the mountain streams, make massy clouds
Forget to drink the ocean's water up,
And causes drought, thus bringing adverse times, The
Kaveri ceases not to flow. It lands
In various ports sweet-scented things like musk,
And *akhil*, and the fragrant sandal-wood.
Where waters foam and make a rushing noise
At the entrance of the tanks enclosed by bunds,
There maids disport by plunging into them.
The farmers with their sickles bend to reap
Their harvests, pile rice sheaves in immense stacks,

Heap daily grains threshed out that look like hills,
And store it in large bins enclosed in straw
That stand ranged close without a space between.
Each plot enclosed, five acres in extent,
Produces paddy thousand *kalams* full.
This is the land the Kaveri well sustains,
And this, the realm the king doth own.

NOTES

1-2. *move to places new.* *Porunars* or bards have no settled habitations. They move from place to place. See General Introduction to *Pattupattu* : *Attupadai*.

5. *head.* The globe-like part of a lute called *patthal*.

6. *like a fork.* The middle part of a *patthal* is raised, and the sides slope like a caret.

10. *dame in early pregnancy.* Note the frequency with which poets refer to pregnant women. See Introduction : Realism. Ll. 9-10 may appear indelicate to modern readers. But considering that common women were practically nude the description was not indecent.

18. *millet husked.* Those who have seen the tinai grain husked will appreciate the comparison.

21. *the goddess.* Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. For other references to her in *Pattupattu* see notes on l. 375 *M. Kānchi*.

23-24. A hyperbole ?

25-56. A very fine description of female beauty.

48. *navel.* The poet is able to describe this part as the songstress is nude.

55. *panting dogs.* An exquisite simile. Cf. *S. P. Padai*, l. 23.

M. P. Kadam, ll. 50-51 ;

68. *the god.* Some jungle deity.

71. *three great kings.* No doubt the poet is thinking of Chola, Pandya kings.

76. *in a former birth.* For transmigration the Chera,. Introduction. Cf. *P. Palai*, 1. 43.

and ancient Tamils see

82-end: King Karikalan's generosity, character, and rule.

83. *I.* Probably the author of this poem is recounting his own experiences.

88. *double beat.* The drum (*udukku*) is beaten on both sides.

89. *sides mottled.* The eye-like dark circle in the middle of the sides of the drum is made of paste, and when worn out becomes spotted.

96. *chance—deeds.* Hindus welcome mendicants, etc., privilege to serve them.

and think it a

103. *clothes.* They knew how to weave beautiful cloth in those days. cf. *S. P. Padai*, 1. 308 ; *M. P. Kadam*, 1. 732.

108. *drink.* The wandering minstrels were addicted to much toddy drinking.

112. *rishis.* The point is that rishis, though ascetics, eat well in order to prolong life, and enjoy the benefits of their devotions. Why should not, then, a minstrel enjoy life too ?

120. *attracted bees.* Somewhat hyperbolical.

125. *us.* The bards and fellow minstrels that came king's bounty.

128 seq. Ancient Tamils ate meat. to enjoy the afterwards. The bards were great gluttons.

Vegetarianism was introduced

184-185. *maids—danced.* Dancing was a popular art.

137. *cooked rice.* Rice has been the principal food of the Tamil country and so is the climax of the king's hospitality. *Looked like buds.* Note the striking simile.

143-144. Somewhat humorous.

151-156. What gifts to a wandering minstrel! Yet we must remember that kings in ancient times made much of poets and bards, as it is they that published their achievements.

157. *Ilaiyon's Son.* Karikalan is celebrated in length.

Pattinapalai at great

160. *Muruga.* The war-god of the Dravidians. *T.* entirely devoted to the singing of his praises.

M. Padai is

166-167. There are two points of comparison king increased in power like the sun mounting up the as brilliant as the sun.

in this simile. The sky, and his rule was

170-171. *god of death.* Yama.

172. Another simile that has two points of comparison: valour in tender years (lion's whelp); and the destruction of powerful foes (elephants).

178-179. *battle at Venni.* Karikalan defeated the Chera and Pandya kings at this battle.

180-181. *blooms of the palmyra.* The symbol of the Chera king.

182. *neem.* The symbol of the Pandyan king.

196-197. *petals are not Nature's.* It is an ornament made of resembling a lotus bud. Cf. *P. P. Padai*, 1. 563.

gold

205. *for spaces seven.* This is the usual way of guest.

speeding the parting

208. *many hamlets.* How extravagant the gift !

218. *transient world.* The meaning perhaps is that the king feels that at some time or other people have to part from one another.

221. *rice bins.* These are often made of clay and covered with straw. Cf. *P. Palai*, l. 11.

222. *red-rice offering.* This is a custom among the Hindus even at the present day. Perhaps it expresses the idea that one should be hospitable to even the much despised crow !

228 seq. The story is told in a *venba* (quatrain) of the youthful Karikalan putting on a grey beard and deciding an intricate case. He was noted for dispensing justice efficiently.

229 seq. Note the concrete pictures by which the poet brings home to us the size and fertility of the Chola kingdom.

233-272. The point in these pictures is that the Chola kingdom is so extensive that the different kinds of regions of which the poet speaks are contained in it, and people, animals, and birds could go from one region to another in the same kingdom.

233. *fertile lands.* *Marutham* region.

241. *For lands.* *Mullai* (pastoral) region.

249-257. A description of the *neithal* (sea-coast) region.

258-259. This means that the people of this region barter their things with those of the *neithal* region.

Wine. Toddy.

260-261. *Marutham* people barter things with those of the *kurinchi.*

267. Wild fowls live in the jungle region, while domestic fowls are seen in fertile tracts.

271. *four diverse regions.*
divided only four are mentioned
in South India.
Of the five regions into which lands are
here as the *palai* (desert) region is not found

273-278. These lines show the power and benignant rule of Karikalan.

285. *The Kaveri ceases not to flow.* Cf. The opening lines of *P. Palai* ; *M. P. Kadam*, 557-559.

291. The Chola land was noted for the cultivation of paddy.

294. *bins of straw.* See notes on l. 221 above.

296. *five acre.* The Tamil word is *veli* (வேலி).

298. *kalams.* A measure of rice.

MULLAIPATTU

MULLAIPATTU

INTRODUCTION

NAME

Mullaipattu means Jungle Idyll. *Mullai* is the physiographical name for the jungle region, as the creeper *mullai*, bearing sweet-scented flowers, is found abundantly in the jungle.

SUBJECT MATTER

Agam or Subjective Element

According to the poetic convention laid down by Tholkappiar, the *agam* or subjective element of *mullai* poetry should be patience shown by a wife, who is separated from her husband. This element is contained in lines 1-28 in the Tamil text, and lines 1-25 and 104-117 in the translation.

A chieftain goes away during the summer on a military expedition leaving his wife in the jungle home, promising to return before the rains set in. But he does not return at the stated time. The rains fall abundantly. The wife is plunged in grief. Her maid-servants go out to the outskirts of the village, as was the custom of the time, to listen to words casually spoken by people that would serve as an omen to indicate the future. They worship at a temple, and make offerings of *mullai* buds, and wait for an omen. A cowherdess says to a distressed calf that its dam will soon return driven by herdsmen. The maids take this as a good omen, and report it to their mistress, and assure her that her lord will return soon after accomplishing his purpose. But the lady is inconsolable:

Her painted, flower-like eyes shed drops of
tears
Resembling pearls.

However, she waits for her lord in patience in her seven-storeyed mansion. There is an alternation of paroxysms of grief and self-control. At one time

She shakes with passion, deeply sighs and
Like a peahen struck with arrows . .
quakes

And reflecting long, consoles herself.

She suddenly hears the march of her husband's
and is filled with joy.
victorious troops
of

It may be noted that the poet has emphasised the suffering the wife more than her patience, the characteristic of *mullai* poetry.

The remaining lines are devoted to the expedition of the chieftain. His camp is described in

Puram or Objective Element

great detail. Instead of walls and moats, the camp is surrounded by a fence of thorny plants. In the courtyard, where are the paths that lead to the tents of the soldiers, stands a ruttish elephant that refuses to eat its food, and is goaded to do so by its keepers. In the
for the chief, containing

camp is a specially constructed house
rooms built by Yavanas. At mid-
night before the day of battle the chief is sleepless thinking of his animals and soldiers wounded in previous engagements. He is successful in the battle, and returns home in triumph with flags waving through the *mullai* lands where trees with flowers as though Nature herself rejoiced with

are decked
him. not

It should be noted that the *agam* and *puram*
separate sections, but are sundered and deftly

elements are within the other. This process is
inserted one Introduction to *Pattupattu*).

called *martu*. (See General

SOCIAL LIFE

In this poem too we note a few ancient customs and manners of the Tamil people. One of them is the observation of omens. Belief in omens is not peculiar to the Tamil land. Ancient Roman generals watched the flight of birds and the entrails of sacrificial victims, before they went on their military expeditions, to ascertain whether they would be successful or not. The Tamils too consulted omens, sometimes the flight of birds, or the chirping of the lizard, as people do even now; or, as noted in this poem, they went out to listen to words casually uttered by people and applied them to their own affairs. In this poem the words of the cowherdess about the quick return of the calf-mother are applied to the sorrowing wife.

The description of the camp gives us a glimpse of the war life of those days. The camp is surrounded with a fence of thorny plants. The tents are covered with leaves, and round them is a palisade of bows and lances. There is an inner tent

of the chief divided into two rooms, in which the chieftain sleeps. Elephants guard the entrance to the tents.

Serving maids accompany their chief to the camp. They are armed with shining dirks attached to their belts (jackets?). They look after the comforts of their master, and take care of the lamps. There is a similar reference to maids accompanying generals in Kalidasa's *Sakuntala*. We may infer from this that there was no purdah system in those days.

The water-clock was an ancient Tamil contrivance to ascertain time. In other countries in ancient times they had hour-glasses with two compartments, and time was calculated by the running of the sands from one compartment to the other. The ancient device of the Tamils was to place a small vessel with a tiny hole in a larger one filled with water, and time was calculated according to the amount of water that trickled into the smaller vessel. Time was reckoned according to *naligais* (24 minute periods).

Yavanas were employed for building and artistic work. Originally the term Yavana was applied to the Greeks (Ionians), and was later extended to the Romans. The Yavanas mentioned in this poem may be Greeks, as they excelled in the Fine Arts, or they may be Romans who at the time traded with India. There are numerous references to the employment of Yavanas by Indian kings in ancient Tamil poetry.

There is also mention of *mlechas* (foreigners) who were mutes employed as body-guards. They are said to communicate their thoughts with gestures only. Presumably mutes were chosen to prevent secrets leaking out. They evidently came from foreign countries. Some of them may have come from North India. Ancient Tamils called the Aryans also *mlechas*, because originally they migrated to India from some region north of it.

There is a reference in the poem to "worthy garlands worn in war." Ancient Tamils had a great love for flowers, and used them on all occasions. It was usual for warriors to wear garlands of flowers appropriate to their respective physiographical divisions. For instance, *vanchi* was used by those of the *mullai* region; *thumbai*, by those of the *neithal*; *vahai* by those of the *palai*; *vetchi*, by those of the *kurinchi*. (See General Introduction: *Agam* and *Puram*).

Gratitude and loyalty have always been among the chief virtues of the Tamil race. The soldiers, we are told, in fighting for their chieftain, "discharged their duty to their chief whose guests they were." The duty one owes to one's host is called *sensottukadan* (the duty owed for good rice).

Other matters of antiquarian interest are: the building of large mansions of seven storeys; the employment of elephants and horses in war; the wearing of bangles by men; and the use of lamps fixed to statues.

Religion

At the time the poem was written we may infer that the Aryans had to some extent penetrated the culture and religious life of the Tamils. At the beginning of the poem there is a reference to the story of Vishnu, who is a purely Aryan god. The corresponding god among the Tamils was Mayon (the deceiver) who, according to Tholkappiar, is the deity of the *mullai* region. The goddess Lakshmi mentioned in the poem is also an Aryan deity. Further, there is mention of Brahmin *yogis* with their ochre-coloured garments and triple staves.

LITERARY MERITS

Mullaipattu has all the distinctive characteristics of the other Idylls. It cannot be said, however, that it reaches the high level of some of the Idylls like *Pattinapalai* or *Kurinchipattu*. The chieftain's camp is described in great detail, but we may say that it is the least interesting part of the poem. We have a number of other pen-pictures: old matrons worshipping at the shrine of Lakshmi; the inner room of the chieftain with the serving maids; the *Yavanas;* the *Mlechas;* the ruttish elephant; and, above all, the wife in her bedroom alternating between grief and patient resignation.

Pen-Pictures

The following show the spontaneous love of the poet for Nature; the triumphal march of the chieftain with a background of beautiful trees, plants, and flowers; the blue flowers of the thick-leaved *gaya*; the *konrai* that sheds golden blossoms; the *kanthal* whose flowers resemble the palm of the hands; and the *thonrai* that "blooms blood-red". There is a reference also to the bending stalks of *varagu*, and *valli* roots that "mature before the bright rains set in."

Nature

There is an elaborate simile at the beginning of the poem.

Imagery : Similes

The clouds resemble Vishnu in three points : (1) the clouds are black like the dark god; (2) they encompass the hills even as Vishnu encompasses the earth ; (3) they pour rain as the water dripped from the hands of Vishnu as he rose expanding himself. The allusion is to the story that Vishnu came down as a dwarf to crush the tyrant, Mahabali, and begged of him three square feet of earth. When that was granted, and the

king poured water as a token of his
himself with the water dripping from
the king with his enormous feet. (See
rattupadai).
gift, the god expanded
his hands, and crushed
Introduction to *Poruna-*

Other instances of similes are : the hum of bees are like the music of the lute ; the quivers hung on bows are like the cloth of the *yogi* hung on a tripod ; the sleepy body-guards walk about like the leaves of the jasmine when shaken by the breeze in drizzling rain; the wife trembling with grief resembles a peahen struck with arrows ; eyes are flower-like ; tears resemble pearls ; lamps blaze like gems ; and the severed trunks of elephants writhe in pain like snakes.

The poet does not, like most ancient poets, indulge in gross exaggerations. The shining dirks of the maids that "change night to day" is a doubtful rendering. Perhaps the meaning is that they carry lamps that change night to day. As to the chieftain being lauded as the victor of all the earth, it is the hyperbolic language of his retainers.

VERSIFICATION AND LANGUAGE

The poem is written in *asiriappa* metre peculiar to the *agaval* verse. (See Introduction to *Pattupattu*). We may note that the versification of the section describing the distress of the wife conveys the sense admirably, and that relating the triumphal return of the chieftain is in perfect accord with the prancing of the horses of his chariot.

The poem is written in pure Tamil except for thirteen Sanskrit and two provincial words. Considering that there are 500 distinct words in this poem, this is only three per cent. of alien words. This is not much, but it shows that Aryan influence had begun to grow. It may be added that mahouts in taming elephants used "northern words", Sanskrit, but, we are told, they used them without understanding their meaning.

THE AUTHOR

This poem is attributed to Napoothanar, the son of a merchant called Ponvanigar of Kaveripattinam. He is also the author of the 29th poem of the anthology, *Natrinai*.

DATE OF COMPOSITION

It is very difficult to ascertain the exact date of the composition of the poem. All we can say with confidence is that the poem was written in the Sangham period.

The style, the

vocabulary, and references to Tamil life, all point to this conclusion. There are those who contend that the poem is one of the earlier Idylls on the ground that this poem along with *Pattinapalai* and *Porunarattupadai* were evidently the models on which all the other Idylls were composed. If we accept this contention we may place the poem in the third century A. D. Others are of opinion that the poem has a great resemblance to *Nedunalavadai* whose hero is supposed to be Nedunjelian, and that the chieftain mentioned in this poem must be the great hero of the famous battle of Thalaialanganam. If we accept this hypothesis, we should place this poem in the fifth century A.D. One recent critic, however, thinks that it was written during the sixth century on the ground that it belongs to the group of Idylls that indicate greater influence of Aryan culture.

We may add that the supposition of some critics that the hero of the poem is Nedunchelian is founded on their belief that the hero should always be a king. This is untenable. The hero may be one of those numerous chieftains that divided among themselves the great Chera, Chola, and Pandya kingdoms.

MULLAIPATTU

It's a short and gloomy eve. The showers fall
From clouds that travel fast with water drunk

From the cold, resounding sea, and rise from hills
With a turn to the right, as Vishnu—he who bears
In mighty hands the disc and right-whorled chank,
And Lakshmi clasps—once measured earth's expanse,
And rose with water dripping from his hands.

Old matrons to their mistress this report:
That they went to the purlieus of a town
Well-guarded, bearing vessels filled with rice
And fragrant *mullai* buds that ope to bees
Whose hum is like the music of the lute.
They strewed these gifts, and joining palms adored
Their god, awaiting words of omen good.
The cowherd with his shiv'ring hands that clasped His
shoulders told a tethered calf distressed
Its dam would soon return by cruel staves
Of cowherds urged. "Auspicious omen this
Confirming good men's happy words," they say.
"Thy spouse will soon return, his tasks fulfilled,
To thee. And so, O fair one, now forget
Thy pain and grief." But she no comfort finds,
Though they assure her o'er and o'er again.
Her painted, flower-like eyes shed drops of tears
Resembling pearls.

The chief destroys the *pidvam* plants that send
Their fragrance wide, and other low green shrubs
That flourish in the forest long and wide
That lies encircled by a river wild.

He wrecks the hunter's narrow-gated holds,
And builds a camp as wide as the sounding sea

And guarded round by walls of thorny plants.
Where paths do meet, along which stand in rows

Some houses roofed with leaves, an elephant
Stands guard with juicy cheeks and tiny eyes.
It scorns to eat the sugar-cane and sheaves
Of field-grown grain with sweet leaves closely bound.
It wipes its face with these, and with its trunk
Then on its sharp tusk hangs. Its keepers young,
Unlearned though, yet Northern words repeat,
And urge the beast with their pronged goads to eat.
The men make tents by planting poles bound tight
With ropes. Around they fix the valiant bows
They used in just and fearless war; on these
They hang their quivers that resemble much
TheBrahmin yogi's garment ochre dyed
Hung on his triple staff. Again, they plant
Their lances that have heads well wrought flower-like.
These they with screens enclose. This palisade
Of bows serves as a rampart strong. Within,
Amidst the army's various forces great,
All build an inner tent of long poles made,
And this by many-coloured curtains screen.

Here maids with slender bangles on their wrists And
tresses falling down their narrow backs
Are seen. They wear strong-handled, flashing dirks
That joined to coloured belts change night to day.
They carry cans for feeding oil; they light
The torches long and trim the dimming lights.

At midnight when the long-tongued bell doth cease
To sound, well-tried and trusted body-guards
With garments wound around their heads and limbs

Keep watch, and make their rounds in a drowsy state,
As flow'ring jasmine vines and brushwood move
When shaken by the breeze in drizzling rain.

The servants who could calculate the hour
Without mistake, appear before their chief
Saluting and exalting him with praise.
They laud him as the victor o'er his foes

On the earth encircled by the raging seas.
They could announce what hour of night it is
By observation of the water-clock.

The chief retires within an inner room
By Yavanas built. These men are armed with
Concealed within their tight and bulging dress.

whips They are of frightful mien ;
Their eyes are fierce. This

their limbs are strong ;
decorated room
Has chains around it with the tiger-mark ;
It's lighted up with lamps that blaze like gems,
And screened by curtains strongly stretched on strings.
Without are coated *Mlechas* standing guard.

They cannot speak, they only gestures show.

The chieftain does not sleep, so keen is he
To join the next day's fray. His mind is full
Of elephants that went to fight in war
Forgetting quite their mates, and suffered much
From wounds received from lances thrown at them. He
also thinks of men who did cut down
Huge trunks of elephants that writhed in pain
Like snakes ; who gained success befitting quite

The wreaths they wore in war, and who discharged
Their duty to their chief whose guests they were. He
feels concern for horses sick with wounds
Received from arrows sharp, their saddles cut,
That wagged their ears in pain refusing food.
Thus plunged in thought, a hand laid on the couch,
His head rests on his other bangled hand.
He then to battle goes. With mighty arm
He kills his foes with the sword he kept for them. And
lasting glory gains according well
With worthy garlands that he wore in war.
Now in his room he rests, where loudly throbs
The war-drum causing terror to his foes.

The wife sees not her lord in slumber sweet
Reposing by her side, and, plunged in grief,
Directs her thoughts to him. Her loneliness
Now makes her sad, and quite upsets her mind.
She then reflecting long consoles herself
And sets her loosened bangles right. Again,
She shakes with passion, deeply sighs, and quakes
Like a peahen struck with arrows ; from her hands
Her bangles slip. Where she is lying down
In splendid mansion high of storeys seven,
Bright lamps by statues borne shed blazing light.
Abundant streams of rain do pour along

The grooves of jointed roofs. Her listening ears
Then fill with sweet and various swelling sounds.

The victor with his large and swelling troops
That won the lands so dear to foes, returns.
The flags of triumph wave, and horns and chanks
Sound loud befitting victory. Blossom now
The flowers blue of thick-leaved *gaya* plant
That grows in sandy soil. The *konrai* tree
With shoots and buds fine golden flowers shed ;
The *kanthal* buds do blossom like the palm ;
The clusters of the *thonrai* blooms blood-red.

He passes wide, red-soiled, thick wooded lands,
Where mid the bending stalks of *ragi* grain
Well-watered by abundant rains, the stags
With twisted horns do leap about with hinds.
He leaves behind the woods where *valli* roots
Mature the month ere glistening rains set in.
He urges in his march his horses swift
That shine in war and draw his lofty car.

NOTES

1. It is the beginning of the rainy season.

4. *Vishnu.* Note the Aryan Vishnu instead of the Tamil Mayon.

4-7. For the elaborate simile see Introduction.

5. *disc—chank.* These are the symbols of Vishnu.

6. *Lakshmi* is an Aryan goddess.

6-7. *once measured—hands.* See note on 1. 47 *P. P. Padai.*

11. *mullai buds.* These are appropriate to this region.

14. *omens.* Observation of omens was made by kings and chiefs when they went to war.

26. *pidvam.* This plant is peculiar to the *mullai* region.

33. *Where paths do meet, i.e.*, in a courtyard.

35. The elephant is ruttish, and so refuses food.

40. *Northern words.* They may be Sanskrit or other North Indian words.

46. *Brahmin yogis* seem to have been familiar persons during the period.

56. *dirks.* Women being in the war-camp is significant.

57. *belts.* Some interpret the word கச்சு as a short jacket of a woman.
But it is absurd to speak of dirks being attached to a jacket.

change night to day. To avoid a hyperbole some commentators
this expression to be connected with " lights."
take 60. *bell.* Probably the bell spoken of here is
announce the watches of the night. Some take it as
one that is rung to the neck of a horse.
the bell attached to 64. *jasmine* ; *brushwood.*

These are appropriate to the *mullai* region.

66. *hour. Naligai* of twenty-four minutes each.

72. *water-clock.* See Introduction.

74. *Yavanas.* Either Greeks or Romans. See Introduction.

81. *mlechas.* Lit. foreigners. Even Aryans were called *Mlechas.* Cf. Mutes employed by the Turks.

91. For warriors wearing appropriate garlands see notes to *P. Palai* 1. 284.

92. *duty*. For a guest's gratitude to his host see Introduction.

104-108. The *agam* element interrupted in line 26 is here resumed.

108. The characteristic *agam* quality is wifely patience.

113. *mansion—seven storeys.*
in other ancient poems also.

Many-storeyed buildings are referred to

114. *statues*. Probably the work of Yavanas.

117-121. These lines should be connected with the last two lines of the poem. This is a fine instance of *martu*. See General Introduction to *Pattupattu : Martu*.

118. The *puram* element is here resumed.

132. Rains set in in the month of September.

PERUMPANARTTU PADAI

PERUMPANARTTUPADAI

INTRODUCTION

NAME

Perumpanarttupadai means a poem giving guidance to a *panan* or bard who plays on a large (*perum*) *yal*. Another interpretation is, a long poem, etc. The former is the more probable explanation. (For the explanation of *panan* and *attupadai* see General Introduction to *Pattupattu : Attupadai*).

SUBJECT MATTER

A minstrel recommends Ilanthirayan to a fellow bard as a desirable patron. He sings his praises and describes his vast kingdom. He recounts graphically the things he would see in the five kinds of tracts he would pass before he reaches his capital,

Kanchipuram : the *palai* land inhabited by hunters ; the *kurinchi* land where robbers live in fortified villages ; the *mullai* land where herdsmen tend their cattle and sheep ; the *marutham* land where farmers cultivate their fields ; and the *neithal* land where fishermen thrive. The sea-port town of Neerpayattu where commerce flourishes ; and Tiruvehai, a suburb of the capital, are also described. Finally, we have a splendid description of the capital, and the virtues and generosity of the king.

ILANTHIRAYAN AND HIS CAPITAL

The patron to whom our *panan* is directed is Tondaiman Ilanthirayan, the ruler of Kanchipuram. As regards the name Ilanthirayan (young wave-man) there are two legends. According to Nachchinarikiniar, a Chola king descended into the lower world and espoused a Naga woman, and the child born of this union was cast adrift on the sea with a *tondai* creeper around its neck meant for identification. The child was washed ashore in the Chola land, and the king granted the child a portion of his kingdom. Another far-fetched story is that this king was the child lost by that Chola king who ruled over Kaveripattinam, and washed ashore. The story is told in the Introduction to *Pattinapalai :* The Lost City.

The following explanation is more plausible. Ilanthirayan was the chief of a maritime tribe called *Thirayer* (sea-men). These

Thirayers were a sea-faring race whose home was Bengal. They migrated to various parts of the East, and some of these settled down in South India. The king was given the title of Thondaiman, probably because the Thirayers adopted the *tondai* creeper as their emblem. This we may infer from the fact that *Thirayer* and *Tondayer* were interchangeably

This poem also speaks of the king as

used in some early poems.

the descendant of the Chola

dynasty (tr. 1. 46). Probably the Chola kings derived their descent from *Thirayer* tribes. Lines (tr.) 47-48 say that the king was descended from

logy is the ocean.

Vishnu whose bed according to mytho-

Not only was Ilanthirayan a patron, but was himself a poet, and his odes are found in the collections known as *Purananuru* and *Natrinai*.

His capital was Kanchipuram, or Kachchi, as it

was Tamilised.
In very early times it was an Aryanised city bearing a Sanskrit name, although technically it belonged to the Dravidian country. It was the southernmost point of Aryan culture in those early times. It is significant that no mention is made of the city in the earliest Tamil poems. The city was the capital of Mavilangai (so called perhaps because it resembled Lanka or Ceylon in some respects) situated in the north Aruva country, now North Arcot District. (See *S. P. Padai:* Introduction). Karikalan later conquered the city, and then it came under Tamil influence. Ilanthirayan was probably appointed feudatory chief. He strengthened Tamil culture by patronising Tamil poets and Tamil learning. There is a fine description of the city in the last portion of the poem. The city reverted to the Aryan rulers after a century or two.

ARYAN INFLUENCE

Although Tamil culture spread in the kingdom of Kanchi after Karikalan's conquest, still there was considerable Aryan influence left, as the territory was Aryan when it was conquered. From the poem we learn that there was a Brahmin village where Brahmins recited Vedic texts, and taught even parrots their verses, and performed priestly rites, erecting the *yupa* post. Evidently they did not eat meat, and did not rear fowls and dogs, as these were considered to be unclean. The Aryan Vishnu is mentioned in this poem. He is said to reside in Trivehur reclining on a serpent bed. He is "Vishnu tall, dark-skinned, from whom was born the four-faced god." From him was born Ilanthirayan. Again, there is a reference to the Aryan Mother-goddess, "a beauteous queen . . . whose great womb bore the Red god." A science of horses is mentioned, and such a science

existed only among the Aryans. The poem has allusions to Aryan events and places. Ilanthirayan's martial feats are compared to those of the Pandavas in characteristically Aryan hyperbolic style. Those who wait to pay tribute are compared to those who wait to cross the river Ganges. At the end of the poem we have a description of *rishis* performing their yogic rites. It should, however, be remembered that the framework of the poem, such as the description of the life of the various parts of the kingdom and its division into the conventional five regions, is entirely Dravidian.

SOCIAL LIFE

We are able to glean much information about the life of ancient Tamils from this poem. The conventional five regions are separately described in great detail, and from this we can picture to ourselves how they lived their lives in those days.

The chief pre-occupation of the rulers of the time was war. Kanchi's king was, according to the poet, reputed to be a great warrior, who destroyed the fortifications of his enemies and compelled them to pay tribute. There is an allusion to the ancient custom of the victorious king wearing the crown of the defeated king in the battle-field, which Tholkappiar calls *mannu mangalam* (மன்னு மங்கலம்). The king was surrounded by wise counsellors, and ruled his subjects justly. He was merciful to the enemies who submitted to him. He was extraordinarily

generous to poets and wandering minstrels, and loaded them with valuable presents. He rode on a lotus-topped chariot drawn by four milk-white horses. Trade with foreign countries flourished, and fine horses were brought from the West, and other good things from the North in ships. There were light-houses to direct vessels to their destination. Yavanas (a term that included all foreigners) put up swan-shaped lamps on the prow of their boats. Salt sellers travelled through the land in carts accompanied by their families, while the wives drove the cart. Pepper bales were carried on the back of asses. The highways were guarded by soldiers as a protection against robbers. Toll was levied on goods carried by traders.

We have a good account
In the *palai* land the hunters

of what people had for their food. Rice was
lived on the animals they hunted. the flesh

the staple food. The people of the *kurinchi* region ate of rams, and drank rice-toddy. The herdsmen of the *mullai* land ate *tinai* rice with milk, curds and ghee. The farmers of the *marutham* tract ate white rice, *varagu*, the fried flesh of the domestic fowl, *avarai* seeds, (sugar-candy) and *aval* made of rice. Those who dwelt in groves ate various kinds of fruits such as

plantains and jak, and the pulps of young palmyra fruits. They drank the water of tender coconuts, and ate *valli* roots. The fishermen of the *neithal* land ate fish such as *kayal* and *valai*, and drank a pottage made of the paste of unpounded rice cooled in large pots, and warm toddy matured in wide-mouthed jars. The Brahmins did not eat meat and did not even rear fowls. Their food consisted of a special kind of rice called *rasannam* with sliced sour pomegranates flavoured with pepper and fragrant leaves and boiled in ghee, and with mango pickles.

Women moved about freely. The girls in the Brahmin village sported in ponds. Rich ladies played games with balls, and also indulged in a game called *kalangu* on sandy courtyards. (This game is played even now in the Tamil country and is called in Jaffna *kokkan*. It is called in English knuckle bones or dibs, and the game consists in throwing small bones or pebbles from the palm and catching them on the back of the hand). They wore fish-shaped jewels, ear-rings, and golden anklets. The shepherdesses were thrifty. They churned curds with churning rods and made butter-milk and ghee, which they carried on their heads placed on pads and bartered them for gold nuggets and fine cows. They supported their families with this industry—a characteristic touch bringing out the trait of the Tamil woman as a wage-earner.

The work of the farmers in tilling their fields, ploughing, sowing, weeding, reaping, and storing the grain and straw, is very much the way in which the work in the fields is carried on to-day by farmers in the Tamil country.

Other points of interest are: houses covered with grass and palm leaves; deer skin mats; hounds kept chained in kennels for hunting; deer used as decoys; grains stored in tall bins; rice pounded in mortars made in the ground; buying and selling by barter; beds with string bottoms; fire produced by rubbing sticks together; and meals served on teak and palmyra leaves.

In the various regions described the Muruga cult was prevalent, but when we come nearer the capital we find

Religion Aryan worship. We find Brahmins reciting Vedic texts and performing Aryan rites, and *rishis* performing their *tapas*. We are told that men of various faiths held high festivals. Probably these included Jains and Buddhists. The mention of Vishnu in three or four places in the poem shows the existence of Aryan faiths in the kingdom.

LITERARY MERITS

The poem possesses all the excellences of the other Idylls. (See General Introduction to *Pattupattu*: Literary Appreciation).

We may note some of them with special reference to this poem.

The poem is a long string of pen-pictures. The various regions of the kingdom are painted with a wealth of

Realism detail. Especially to be noted are the pictures of shepherd life, of the farmer's life, and of Kanchipuram and its suburbs. We will note here a few realistic touches which the poet brings in incidentally to heighten his
the farmers reap their fields,

description. When

The short-legged fowl whose neck is black,

alarmed,

Escapes, and takes with it its growing brood
That it may in the forest make its home.

There is a vivid picture of a bird that steals a pendant, flies with it, and sits upon a *yupa* post. The pregnant monkey seizing the ghee-mixed rice meant for the elephant is intended to heighten the description of the elephants in the streets of the city. The farmer's children playing with toy-carts, sucking milk from the breasts of their foster mothers, and going to sleep when tired brings before us vividly the home life of the farmers. There is a fine realism in the following lines on the Bharata war:

Pandavas . . .

. . . .

overthrew

With shouts of joy their hated hundred foes
In the fray. The corpses of dark elephants
That floated on the rivers stained with blood
Looked like the clouds that roam the evening sky
In which the fair-faced crescent-moon doth shine.

Another is about the Ganges. The feudatory chiefs that wait on the king to pay their tributes are like those who wait to cross the river Ganges that "sweeps along bright particles of gold, and leaping tears its way through the ocean's foam." The concluding lines give us the best realistic picture in the poem:

In the wooded forests young the peacock makes
A screeching noise. The leaping ape doth pluck
And scatter forest blooms. The monkey scrapes

Its body, and the beasts repose in yards
In front of houses. Here the *rishis* tend

Their fires unquenched, and do their rites with logs
The white-tusked elephants do bring to them.

The above passages,
of the poet's

and especially the last, are also examples Nature
keen observation and appreciation of

Nature. The poet seems to have a partiality for clouds and rains, which he mentions a number of times, and for the sun, the moon, and the stars. The poet has not only observed the general aspects of Nature, but has also minutely

noted individual objects: the red legs of doves, the three sides of coconuts, the erect ears of the ass, the bent petals of the *agatthi* flower, and the black neck and short legs of the *kadai* fowl. He has noted the fact that the fewness of pulps in
shows their excellence, that the spider weaves
rice stacks, and that the *valai* fish is scared by

a large jak fruit
its webs around

the shadow cast
by the cane growing by the side of the lake. Here is a fine
picture

of landscape painting :

The striped and shapely blooms of *kutku* vines
That, long and green, twine round the trunks
short-stemmed
Of *kanchi* trees in plenty fall in pools
Formed in the water-swept and shining sands.
These look like rice-cakes placed in milk, prepared
In pans with thread-like paste with jelly mixed
By those who trade in cakes.

Similes

Our poet revels in similes. We have at least 73 similes in the poem, most of which are simple having only one point of comparison. First, we will notice a few that are more elaborate. In three passages quoted above there are such similes. In the passage relating to the Pandavas there are two similes. In the first there are two points of comparison : the prowess of the king is likened to that of the Pandavas ; and the foes he conquered are as numerous as those killed in the Bharata war. In the second, the corpses of those killed in the fight floating down the river blood-smeared are compared to the clouds at sunset in the evening sky. Again, in the passage relating to the Ganges there are two points of comparison : those who wait for paying tributes are likened to those who wait to cross the river ; and they are full of anxiety and fear like the latter. The third elaborate simile is found in the passage quoted above to illustrate the power of the poet in landscape painting. There is only one point in the comparison of the *kutku* blooms floating on the surface of pools looking like rice-cakes floating on milk. But we note here, and in many other similes elsewhere, a characteristic that makes them impressive. Instead of barely indicating the point of comparison, the things used for comparison are elaborated in detail. For instance, in this passage the poet is not satisfied with mentioning *kutku* vines ; he goes on to give us a picture of these vines twining round *kanchi* trees. And it is not enough to say that rice cakes are placed in milk ; he must say what kind of cakes they are and how they are prepared and sold. Kanchipuram is greater than other cities even as the jak fruit is esteemed above all fruits. But not satisfied with this statement, he goes on to say that the jak tree bears fruits without blossoming, and that on its branches birds sing.

PERUMPANARTTUPADAI

83

In the opening lines in which the *yal* is described, there are as many as nine similes. And these help us to picture to ourselves this ancient instrument that is not known now. The joy of mendicants whose hearts are gladdened by presents from the king is like rains falling on parched forests. The gems that shine in the girdles of ladies are compared to dew shining on the boughs of the *konrai* tree. The golden fillets given to the minstrels shine like lightning flash in wintry clouds. The small silver vessels in which the *panar* children are served are like stars, while the bigger ones in which their elders are served are like moons. Ilanthirayan is superior to other kings as the right-whorled chank is superior to others found in the sea. The back of squirrels with white stripes is like the split *ilava* fruit showing the down within. The roofs of the huts thatched with the leaves of the *eenthu* palm is like the backs of the porcupine. The bubbles on the curds churned from milk are like mushrooms. The silvery web that surround paddy stacks is like the gauzy attire of demons. The multi-coloured flowers in ponds look like the rainbow. The chastity of Brahmin women is like that of Arunthathi. The jewel that glitters in the beak of the king-fisher is like the lamp the Javanas put up on their masts. The breasts of children smeared with scented paste are like the touch-stone on which gold dust remains. The palmyra leaf vessel (*pila*) used for drinking is like the opened spathe of the arecanut tree.

Like the other Idylls there are practically no hyperboles. The only exaggeration we find in the poem is the description of the Bharata war quoted above, and that of the paddy stacks looking like the Northern mount. We may also note that the exaggerated praise given to Ilanthirayan, who does not seem to have done much in the way of military feats, is in effect, though not in language, hyperbolical.

THE AUTHOR

Tradition attributes this poem to Urithirangannanar, the author of *Pattinapalai*. This has not been established by internal evidence. (For an account of this poet see Introduction to *Pattinapalai*).

DATE OF COMPOSITION

If tradition is to be believed as to the authorship of the poem, then the author of course lived in the reign of Karikalan, in whose honour *Pattinapalai* was composed. All we can say is that it may have been composed during the reign of that king, the fixing of the date of which is not easy. We may say that

the poem, like the other one, was composed at the latest before the third century. (For a discussion of the age of Karikalan see Introduction to *Pattinapalai*).

VERSIFICATION

The poem is written in *asiriappa* peculiar to the *agaval* verse. (For explanation of this metre see General Introduction to *Pattupattu* : Versification).

PERUMPANARTTUPADAI

The summer's heat was strong and fierce,
When the many-rayed sun ushered in the day
Removing darkness thick which quite enwrapped
The extensive sky.

O minstrel! Thou upon thy shoulder left
Dost bear a *yal* encased in a cover made
Of leather coloured like the inside of blooms,
Whose shining petals are attractive much
To bees, of *path'ri* trees whose stems are large.
The leather strips are so united well
That they appear as though they melted were
Together looking like the unopened spathes
Containing pretty flowers of arecanut trees
Whose stems are large. Their sides are full of holes.
The opening of the *yal* resembles a mouth
That has no uvula, and looks as dark
As the mouth of a water-spring dried up.
Its bottom curves up like the crescent moon.
Its straps could be made either loose or tight
Like bangles worn by ladies on their wrists,
Whose shoulders are as smooth as bamboos tall.

The handle large is coloured sapphire blue.
Its twisted strings resemble golden wires.

O haggard minstrel! Thou dost not speak well
Of learning, as thou hast no patron kind
Upon this sea-girt earth where the sun and the moon
Move circling to the right Mount Meru high.
Thou with thy numerous kin dost roam about
Like bats that seek ripe fruits on mountains girt
With vapour that doth rise when there's no rain.

We with our numerous kindred hungry long
Have come from him receiving horses white
That shake their heads with pride, and elephants,
And wealth such as does not decrease by gifts.
As high clouds pour down rain in forests dry
And make them full of joyful bustle great,

Thy heart will much rejoice if thou dost go
To Thirayan so named because the waves,
They say, brought him ashore. With many spears
His army is equipped . Without a fault,
He shines superior to the three great kings
Who guard the people of this spacious earth

Whose armies great are led by drums of war
E'en as the right-whorled chank is valued more
Than other kinds found in the shining sea.
Of the Chola line, he traces his descent
From the god who spanned the earth, whose breast
doth bear The sacred mark, and who has a sea-dark
skin.

Thus thou too may'st remove thy want. His land
I'll now describe. There thunder does not peal.

Snakes do not kill. The tiger wild harms not.
Rest there, O suppliant, when feeling tired.
Invited, stay for a time; then go thy way.

On the way thou'lt meet some noisy carts whose
Are made of well-bent wood on which are set
wheels

Fine spokes attached to drum-like axles large.
On these are strong floors set on two large poles
Together joined. The tents are made with mats
Of rushes woven, looking like the clouds
That overshadow hills in rainy months.
Its front resembles huts that watchers make
To save their crops from being eaten up
By elephants. On it are a chicken coop,
A mortar-like small hoop with holes whose shape
Is like the knee of an elephant whose tusks
Resemble bamboo shoots, and a pickle jar
Well-bound that looks like a sweet-toned well-strapped drum
That dancers use. His wife who guards her child
With the fine leaves of the flow'ry neem doth sit
In the forepart of the cart, and drives the bulls.
The men that trade in salt adorned with wreaths
Of woven leaves with large, fine shoulders strong
And powerful wiry frames protect the cart
By walking by the side of bulls well hitched
To the small-holed yoke. They take with them spare bulls
And go through hamlets reached by lengthy roads
Announcing the sale of salt. Bold strangers sell
To those who rest from the journey of a day
Rare, useful things obtained from hills and seas.
Their chests are marked with wounds received

In fights from arrows sharp. They wear tight clothes
To which are swords attached. Their shoulders strong
Are wide, and bear the cruel bow. They are
Like Muruga, who lives in the *kadamba*;
Like the god of death they strongly wield the spear.
They wear white-handled shining swords that look
Like snakes that crawl on hills, hung on their sides
By ribbons striped. They wear shoes on their feet
To guard their soles, and on their bodies, coats.
The erect-eared ass that has a scarred, strong back
Which bears the burden of a pepper bale
That looks like a large jak fruit with scanty pulps,
Is driven on wide paths. The men that stay
In hamlets armed with bows the crossings guard,
And levy toll.

Along the spacious forest paths there are
Huts that are thatched with leaves of *eenthu* palm
That flourishes on uplands long, whose back
Is black like river sands, and whose sharp stalks
Are rich and pointed like a spear. The roofs
Look like the backs of porcupines, and help
To keep out rats and squirrels bearing stripes
Upon their backs and looking like the skins
Of fair fresh fruits on long-stemmed *ilava* boughs.
In these Eyin women lately brought to bed
Lie huddled with their children on deer skins,

While other white-toothed women dig the ground
With spades with caps of iron and handles strong.
They raise the dust of black-soiled barren lands
And take the soft rice grain stored in the ground.
They pound this rice with pestles short and strong
In mortars made in the ground in courtyards where
Some decoy deer are tied, and the *vila* tree
Its shadow casts. They add to this the brine
That from deep wells is drawn and cook this rice
Unsifted in edge-chipped old pots on hearths
That ruined lie. Thou and thy kin will get
This food with salted meat on teak leaves served,
When thou dost claim to be of Manar caste,
And a subject of the lord of hills who wears
War-anklets on his legs as a mark to show
His shining deeds.

In the desert tracks hide hunters cruel-eyed
In pits that lie around the ponds that're dug

For storing water during rainless months
To which the thirsty deer directs its steps.
They too await the boar whose horns are bent
Like the *agatthi* bloom. This during midnight watch.
But during day they hunt with panting dogs
In woods, for food, the hare resembling much
The outer petals fine of lotus blooms

That grow on thorny stems. They beat the shrubs To
drive the hare to a spot enclosed with nets
Together tied to hinder its escape.

If from this dry place thou dost go and reach
The forts of Eyinas wielding cruel bows,
Thou wilt find spacious houses where are ranged
Well-blunted spears that smell of flesh much feared
By foes and dealing death which eager kites
Await, bows well-strung, arrows sharp, and shields
Adorned with gems. There are high ramparts thatched
With *oogam* grass ; sheds propped on posts on which
Hang quivers full of arrows notched that look
Like honeycombs on hills, or noisy drums ;
Strong kennels hard to reach where hounds are chained ;
Strong forest forts enclosed by fences live
Of thorns : a portal great with well-barred doors ;
And gates where fine, strong pointed stakes are ranged.
In many homes they'll serve to thee red rice
In uplands grown that looks like berries red
Of *eenthu* palms that grow on barren ground.
Fried flesh of the iguana too will be served
Which hounds bring from the hunt.

Then thou wilt reach the land where pregnant dames
Are brave and not afraid of elephants
That cross their way, or harmful serpents dread,
Or roaring thunder heard in the welkin blue.
The chief is of the race of men that rob
Their food with threat of death. A striking jaw
He has, and looks like a tiger fierce. The lands
Of foes that do not heed him he attacks
With soldiers armed with cruel bows that hunt
Like hounds that do not ever miss their prey.
He drives at dawn their cows and barter them
For drinks. Rice-toddy brewed at home he drinks
Which he enjoys much, and he eats the flesh
Of sturdy rams killed in the public grounds.
These war-like people dance with glee by day,

Their strong left shoulder used to bearing bows
Inclined to the right, to the sound of noisy drums
With leather sides played in their midst.

Beyond this there are huts on short posts propped
On which hang leafy twigs for ewes to eat.
Dense shrubs grow near the gates. Strong ropes secure
The doors. The beds have bottoms made of strings
On which are spread straw wisps, and over it
Are strips of ram's skins, and upon this bed
A watcher sleeps. To short pegs in the yards
Are ropes attached to which are cattle tied.
Around the village full of cow manure
Is a thorny hedge. Lean sheep and goats do there
Repose, and birds awake from sleep at dawn
When darkness flees. The dark Aye woman then
With moving pendants on her ears, who has
Smooth shoulders bamboo-like and waving hair,
Turns hard the churning rod with a rope and makes
A noise like tiger's roar. She butter makes
From tasty curds on which are bulging drops
That look like mushroom buds. Upon her head

She carries butter-milk on a flower-decked pad
In a pot whose mouth is marked with drops of curds
And sells them in the morning time. She feeds
Her kin with food bought by its sale, and buys
Gold nuggets bright, milk-buffalos, good cows,
And dark milk-kine with the price of ghee she sells.
If thou dost wish to stay at herdsmen's homes
Who whistling purse their lips, thou wilt receive
Good milk and *tinai* rice resembling much
A numerous brood of crabs. Sometimes he plays
Sweet *palai* tune on a pipe whose blackened stops
Are holed by red-hot brands that send forth smoke,
Enkindled by the fire produced by sticks
Together rubbed. When he desires not this,
He'll then play *kurinchi* tunes on a *yal*
Bow-shaped and made of curv-ed *kumil* wood
With fingers on its fibre strings. The bees,
Mistaking much this tune for the hum produced
By their own kind, delight in hearing it.

Then passing from the wide and grass-filled tract
Thou wilt go through the land around which lie
Thick woods in which grows thorny *vidathai*.
Cow stalls are there. In front-yards rice-bins lie

That look like a crowd of elephants, in which
Is stored much grain. The grind-stones set in sheds
Look like the legs of elephants. Short wheels
Of carts and ploughs are placed against the walls
Of shacks quite old begrimed with smoke. Huts thatched
With *varagu* straw that look like clouds spread out
In rainy months are seen in hamlets small.
Here thou wilt get the small-grained *varagu* rice
On short stems grown reembling *poolai* blooms
Whose buds are long, served with the pulse of seeds Of
avarai vine that look like coloured buds
Of the *vengai* tree.

Then further go, and thou wilt reach the place
Where ploughmen live who make their furrows well.
Their houses well-stocked are with plenteous food
And at their front courtyards they yoke big bulls
Well trained to the plough. The shares that go quite deep
Look like the iguana's face, and the curv-ed ploughs
To which they are attached look like the trunks
Of elephants. They sow, and weed the fields
With weeding hooks, and when they come to reap,
The short-legged fowl whose neck is black, alarmed,
Escapes, and takes with it its growing brood
That look like fragrant blooms of *kadampu*,
That it may in the forest make its home.
The ploughmen level with their feet their fields,
Extensive, muddy, and unploughable,
Stirred up by bulls that fight with muddy horns,
And digging up the *korai* grass, destroy
The lairs of crabs with forked feet that appear
Like pincers used by blacksmiths blowing hard
Their bellows while they labour at their forge.
They set the plants that are in bundles tied

In flooded fields in which much water stands.
The workers' pleasing pretty children young
Have tender skins resembling smooth steel plates.
They wear upon their breasts a fine paste made
Of *kanpu* seeds. They're coloured like the face
Of touchstones that are used for testing gold.
If they reject the honey-scented blooms
Of the thick-stalked *neithal* which the weeders pluck,
Then they will take the petalled bent-stemmed blooms
Turned down and black, of the budded *mullai* plant
That's full of thorns, and make fine garlands bound
With *korai* grass split with their teeth; and deck

Their nitty heads. If they care not for lumps
Of old cooked rice, they pound with pestles rice,
And *aval* make in yards of sloping huts
On ridges built and thatched with straw. This noise
The neighbouring parrots scares, that have bent-bills
Because they fear some harm.

In fields that bring continued income great
The reapers cut the thick and hollow stalks
Of ripened rice whose large grains look like swarms
Of stinging wasps. They pile in large full heaps
The sheaves in ample threshing grounds, where gifts
Are offered to the gods beneath the shades
Of snake-infested *marutham* branches tall.
They pull the large stacks down around which lie
The spider's silver web resembling much
The white attire of demons going through
The devil dance in ordered kindred crowds.

Then they thresh out the grain with bulls,
Remove the chaff and straw, and dry the grain
By sifting it in the west wind with their hands.
The grain thus heaped in *marutham* hamlets rich
Resembles Meru great, the northern mount.

Fine houses there are on whose sides are tied
To pegs with long stout ropes bent-legg-ed calves
Of stately cows. In them are found old bins

That were used long, in which through open tops
Unreachable with ease by ladders high

They store old grains of various kinds. Young ones
Play with attractive cars that are mere toys
Constructed by young carpenters. When tired
By weary walk, they take rest and embrace
Their full-milk-breasted foster mothers fair,
And having sucked their milk, they go to sleep.
If thou dost stay in this place ever rich,

Where hunger is unknown, thou'lt eat white rice
Supplied by men who never cease to work,
With well-fried flesh of their domestic fowls.
Thou wilt enjoy the juice of sugar-canes
And sugar crystals in the smoky huts
Where noisy presses sound like roar of crowds

Of elephants by lions attacked on hills
Where bamboos grow and clouds do roam about.

Again, thou wilt arrive at short-roofed huts
With *vanchi* and white *kanchi* branches built.
Across the beams are ordered bamboo laths
Well bound with *thalai* strings. These huts are thatched
With *tharpai* grass. Fish baskets lie in front
Of sheds with bent-stemmed *punnai* branches built
And paved with sands upon which fruit vines creep.
Here fishers old and young sit with their kin.
They with their children go to fish in pools
Quite deep and dark, where red-streaked *kayal* fish
And prawns move mixed like bows and arrows sharp
That smell of flesh. They watch the banks of pools
Which e'en in summer long remains so deep
That shoulders of the men who bathe in them
Cannot be seen. If thou dost wish to stay
In homes of men who use their knotted nets,
Thou wilt be served with drink made with the paste
Of rice unpounded, cooled in large, wide pots,
And, mixed with it, fine powdered sprouts of rice
That look like white ants' nests where serpents live ;
And toddy that's stirred with the fingers well
And then matured by being kept in jars
That have wide mouths for two full days and nights
To sweeten it. All this thou wilt receive
Along with fresh fish fried, when thou art tired.

A *panan* who is skilled in catching fish,
On shoulders on which he would carry flesh
Now bears a leathern bag containing bait
Which to a string on a bamboo pole he ties.
But the wide-mouthed *valai* fish devours the bait,
And wrenching it from the trembling string, escapes.
In long and flooded pools where fishes dread
The moving shadow of the neighbouring cane,
Are pretty, fire-like blossoms dear to gods
Which one should never dare to pluck. There are
In wide ponds lilies tinted like red lac
And blossoms blue and those of various hues
Appearing like the rainbow bright that lights
The sky's high wide expanse. When those who pluck
These blossoms fine give them to thee, wear them
In broad day-light; and then thou may'st depart.

Take thou thy rest in the village where are sheds
Supported on short posts to which are tied
Fat calves. The houses are with cow dung smeared,

In which are idols. Fowls and dogs are banned.
Here live the guardians of the Veda truths
Who teach e'en bent-billed parrots to utter them. Fair
bangled Brahmin dames that are as chaste
As the one whose name the northern star doth bear
That lights the wide bright sky, will serve to thee At

sunset well-cooked rice that bears the name
Of a bird, with slices of the citron fruit
With fragrant leaves and pepper flavoured well
And boiled in butter taken from the milk

Of red-skinned cows, and also pickles made
Of fragrant soft fruits of the mango tree.

A crowd of bathing girls indulge in play
Where people drink. A fish-shaped pendant's lost.
A sapphire-hued king-fisher seeking prey
Flies off with it, avoiding palms in which
Birds congregate, and sits on a *yupa* post
Where *yogis* wise perform their sacred rites.
The jewel shines like a lamp shaped like a swan
That Yav'nas burn on masts, and twinkles like
The morning star that ushers in the day.

Then cross the village called Neerpayattu
And reach the town around whose grand sea-fronts
Lie ships that from the west bring milk-white steeds
With waving manes, and good things from the north.
In sand-strewn streets, there are warehouses high
Which workmen guard. In many varied streets
Are storeyed mansions great where *Paravers* live.
Abundant food is stored in houses there.
The bulls used for the plough are stalled apart
From cows ; there rams and dogs do roam about.
Bejewelled dames in sky-high mansions live,
Whose fine clothes wave about their waists, round which
Are belts with jewels decked that shine like dew
Formed in the boughs of budded *konrai* trees.

They walk like feathered peacocks fine that sound
A stirring note in stately neighbouring hills.
When tired with play with balls well-bound with strings
Their golden anklets make a tinkling sound.
Their bangles small move sparkling on their wrists,
While they on pearl-like sands spread out play games
With golden nut-like balls. The leaves that grow
On green vines wave at gates of drinking shops.
In front yards lie the faded blossoms used

In worship. While the women toddy brew,
The water spilled from the plates they wash collects
And muddy makes the soil. The hairy sow
That has a large black brood doth wallow there.
The short-legged male pig not allowed to mate
With it is fed on pounded rice and kept
For days in pits. Its fat flesh fresh with blood
Thou wilt receive with toddy sweet that cheers.
High mansions there are that appear to touch
The sky and serve as posts that prop the heavens.
Their tops could not be reached with ladders high.
Their roofs are paved, not thatched. In them are lamps
That shine at nights and look like lights in ports
Inviting those that sail on wide, deep seas.

Leave these behind and go to houses fine
In groves where ploughmen live, in whose front yards
Grow saffron plants. And fine flower gardens here
Diffuse sweet fragrance, and the huts are thatched
With dry, bent plaited leaves of coc'nut trees
Whose rugged trunks resemble elephants
With mortar-like large legs that vie with hills.
If thou dost stay in such a hut, thou'lt get
Big jak fruits that do grow in clusters low
Whose scooped out pulps men eat with relish great;
The sweet milk of young coconuts that grow
In branchless trees; alluring plantain fruits
Whose bunches ripe bend down with heavy weight;
Young pulpy fruits of thick-stemmed palmyras;
And many other dainties sweet to eat.
If these thou dost reject, eat *valli* roots
Mature, with spreading *sempu* leaves.
Near areca palms stand long-stemmed coc'nut trees
From which three-sided fruits in plenty fall,
Like rains that fall by day, on cooking pots
By hungry passing strangers used, and cause
Them slip and fall.

Pass then this wealthy town of income large
That ceases not, in which grow various trees.
Then crossing foreign towns in which there are
Great sky-high mansions in which people dance
The *valli* dance, thou'lt reach Tiruveha town
Where lives the god that sleeps on a serpent bed
Much like an elephant that on a hill

Reclines on which long *kanthal* clusters grow.

In forests young where the sun's rays do not shine
And where the cuckoo hides in foliage thick,
The striped and shapely blooms of *kutku* vines
That, long and green, twine round the short-stemmed trunks
Of *kanchi* trees, in plenty fall in pools
Formed in the water-swept and shining sands.
These look like rice-cakes placed in milk, prepared
In pans with thread-like paste with jelly mixed
By those who trade in cakes. In gardens washed
By waves at flow time drink thou toddy clear
In vessels green shaped like the pregnant spathes
Of thick areca trees, and make thy stay
Where every day thou couldst enjoy thyself.
In day time play with modest women fair
Whose foreheads bright, around which bees with
mouths Like those of fish do hum, resemble much
The young, small, horned moon by the dragon hid,
And whose fair eyes are cool with toddy drunk.
Then rest with those enjoying nature's charms
In famous, ancient places rare that are
Like paradise abounding in bright blooms
That never fail. Then praise the local god
Of power great, and play sweet tunes on the *yal*
That has a handle black. Then thou may'st go.
In Kanchi's city there are groves in which
The pregnant monkeys seize, when keepers armed
With sticks are negligent, the ghee-mixed rice
Intended for the elephant whose trunks

Hang down, and whose bad temper is subdued
By being tied to wooden pillars strong.
Strong chariots run and make ruts in the streets.

There is an army strong, invincible,
And famous ; markets where the city folk
That densely live do always buy and sell ;
And gates not shut against poor mendicants

Who need no patron else. The city shines
Like fair seed vessels of the lotus bloom

That many-petalled springs from navel fine
Of dark-skinned Vishnu tall from whom was born

The four-faced god. The high walls of the fort
Are built of brick. Among the cities great
In this wide earth surrounded by the sea
That smells of fish and canopied by the sky,
This is the greatest. It is like the jak

That bears the best of fruits producing them
Without first blossoming, on whose rich boughs
Great crowds of singing birds do build their nests. This
ancient place excels much other towns,
As those of various faiths do worship there
And hold high festivals. Great Kanchi's chief
Is like the Pandavas who once did ride

In chariots tall whose tops were lotus-shaped
And fought in many wars. They overthrew
With shouts of joy their hated hundred foes
In wars. The corpses of dark elephants
That floated on the rivers stained with blood
Looked like the clouds that roam the evening sky
In which the fair-faced crescent moon doth shine.
Here lives the bounteous lord of Kanchi's town,
He who is gen'rous to his suppliants.

He devastates the countries of his foes
That fight with him, but gives much wealth to those
Who do his favour seek. The kings that crave
His friendship, and the helpless chiefs who seek
His powerful aid before him humbly bow
And tributes bring, much as the mountain streams
Sweep down to the sea the things that grow on hills.
The kings that wait on him with tributes rich

In splendid palace courts appear like those
Who linger in canoes afraid to cross

The river Ganges great so hard to cross
That flows down from the summit of the Mount

In which the gods reside, and sweeps along
Bright particles of gold, and leaping tears
Its way through sea foam. In the city where
The king resides the din the blacksmith makes,
While forging rings for strong-trunked elephants,
Disturbs the sleep of red-legged doves. The king
That occupies the palace broad in which
Great wealth abounds, has a sense of justice clear
That quite removes the darkness of the mind,
As the morning sun diffuses wide its rays
O'er eastern shores of the threefold sea. Approach
The bounteous king whose counsellors are wise,
Who gives to those who beg from him and those
Who state their wants rich gifts as each desires.
He does his duty due to suppliants.
To bards he gives bright gems. Thus speak to him :

" O scion of Tondai line ! Thou dost desire
Like strip-ed strong lion whelps that long to fight
With bright-streaked elephants, to quite destroy
The ramparts of thy foes and seize their crowns,
Victorious over them, refusing terms
Of peace proposed by them. Thou with the sword
Dost fight with strong arm everywhere. Thou art
A hero that doth heroes well inspire ;
A tyrant thou to tyrants ; to the rich
A benefactor. Prince renowned in war !

I'll sing high praises to thy famous name,
Because thou art unbounded in thy gifts,
As a goblin maid once praised in riddling terms
The beauteous queen that treads the devil dance,
Whose great womb bore the Red god well adorned
With jewels, who the cruel demon killed
In the sea's white foam. May'st thou for ever live!"

Ere thou dost start to play the larger *yal*
Constructed well to suit the rules prescribed,
Salute him with thy hands in duty bound.
Ere thou dost make thy skill well known to him,

He'll call thee to his side. Because he knows
That this world does not last, he thinks it wise

To make his fame secure in this good world
That bears the name of the *jumbu* tree.

He'll take away thy rags that look like moss,
And make thee and thy kin to don good clothes

Well woven with cream-tinted threads. Again,
He'll feed thee with rich meat of various kinds
So well prepared by cooks with sturdy hands
Scarred with the frequent use of curv-ed knives,
And whole red rice that sparkles like the sun

Consisting of selected, well dried grains.
Along with this, delicious food that tastes
Like sweet ambrosia he will thee supply.

Besides supplying thee with tasty food
Of various kinds, before thy little ones
He'll place small vessels made of silver bright
Resembling stars that light the cloudy sky,
And also vessels large that look like the moon.
With happy, loving face he looks at them
And makes them eat well to their heart's content.
He gives them jewels shaped like lotus blooms

And made of gold refined in fire, round which
Bees do not hum, and golden fillets fine
That look like lightning's flash in wintry clouds
That drink from the wintry sea, and showers shed By
day. He'll give thee a chariot made of gold
With bright-maned horses four attached to it,
That are as white as chanks in dark seas found,
They do their work in perfect harmony.
These experts versed in horse-lore praise them much.
Still not content, he gives fine swift-paced steeds
Left in the battle fields by foes whom he
Did put to flight. With them he doth present
Their golden trappings. He will give these gifts
The very day when thou dost call on him.

This is the hilly tract where birds do chant
Sweet songs, and it is here that gods reside.
In wooded forests young the peacock makes
A screeching noise. The leaping ape doth pluck
And scatter forest blooms. The monkey scrapes
Its body, and the beasts repose in yards
In front of houses. Here the *rishis* tend

Their fires unquenched, and do their rites with logs
Which white-trunked elephants do bring to them.
These are the hills where all these things are found
In plenty. From these flow down shining streams.
He is the lord of these high hills. 588

NOTES

5. *shoulder left.* Musicians generally carried their *yal* on their left shoulder. Cf. *S. P. Padai*, 1. 48.

7-23. Note the vivid similes. See Introduction : Similes.

20. *Like bangles.* Cf. *S. P. Padai*, 11. 289-290 ; *M. P. Kadam*, 11. 30-31.

24-25. *Thou dost not — learning.* It is because he is disappointed about rewards, and remained poor.

27. *Move circling to the right.* A favourite expression of the poets. The sun and the moon seem to go around Mount Meru revolving to the right. Cf. *T. M. Padai*, 1. 4.

38-39. *the waves—ashore.* For the story see Introduction : Ilanthi- rayan.

41. *three great kings.* Chera, Chola and Pandya kings.

44. *right-whorled chank.* Chanks are usually left-whorled, and right-whorled ones are very rare. So they are considered to be of extraordinary value.

47. *the god that spanned the earth.* There was a king called Mahabali who tyrannised over the gods. On Indra complaining to Vishnu of this, the god took the form of a man and was born as a child called Vaman. He

went to the king who was performing his yogic rites and begged for earth three feet in breadth. When he granted it, he expanded himself so that the earth became only one foot in size and the heavens, another foot. Finding that he could not get the third, the god placed his foot the king and crushed him. Cf. *M. Pattu*, 11. 6-7.

on the head of

69. *leaves — of the neem.* These leaves are considered to be efficacious in warding off diseases.

73. *protect the cart.* Perhaps to make the bulls go straight, and to see that the cart suffered no damage.

77. *the sale of salt.* The trade in salt was one of the chief incomes in the South Indian kingdoms. Cf. *P. Palai*, 1. 32.

Strangers. Foreign traders.

84. *Muruga—kadamba.* The kadamba tree is a favourite abode of the god, who wears its blooms. Cf. *M. Kanchi*, 1. 676.

92. *large jak fruits—small pulps.* The poet has fact that large fruits that contain few pulps are most tasty.

observed the

145. *hounds.* S. India was noted for its hunting dogs. Cf. *M. P. Kadam*, 1. 227.

158. *The chief*, i.e., of the *Kurinchi* region.

192. *she feeds.* The Tamil woman has always been a wage-earner, and her thrift is well known.

212. *rice bins.* These were made of clay and covered with straw. Cf. *P. Palai*, 1. 11.

260. *aval.* This is made by crushing moistened rice grain.

266-267. *like swarms of — wasps.* Note the effective comparison of yellow rice to wasps.

279. *Resembles Meru great.* Meru is Himalayas. A hyperbole.

41. *village.* A Brahmin village. This shows that at the time the penetration of the Aryans in the Dravidian country had begun.

347-348. *As chaste as—star.* The star, Arunthathi belongs to the constellation of the Great Bear. According to mythology Arunthathi was the wife of Vashista, and was noted for her chastity. On her death she was

transformed into the star. At weddings the brides are shown this star that
they may follow her virtue.

350-351. *Bears the name—bird.* The name is *rasannam* which means.
both a swan and a special kind of rice.

351. *citron.* A kind of sour pomegranate used for making sour curries.

360. *yupa.* A post to which the victim for a sacrifice is bound.

362. *lamp—swan.* Cf. *Nedunalvadai,* 120.

363.
latterly to

Yavanas. The term was originally applied to the Greeks, and the Romans, and then extended to all foreigners. Here the name

refers to the Greeks who were noted
employed Greek artisans for artistic

for artistic work. The kings of S. India
work in their kingdoms.

367. *from the west — steeds.* Horses were imported from foreign countries. Cf. *P. Palai*, 213.

371. *Paravars.* Inhabitants of maritime districts such as traders, boatmen, and fishers.

385. *nut-like balls.* The word in the text is கழங்கு which is a shrub whose nuts (crickles) are used to play a game. Nachinarkiniar, however, explains the word as anklets. Surely the women could not have played games with valuable ornaments. There was a game called *kalangu* played with these nuts, and the translation is the natural rendering.

387. *faded blossoms.* Usually the yards in front of toddy shops were strewn with flowers. Cf. *P. Palai,* 1. 206.

392. *not allowed to mate.* To make them fat.

394. *fresh with blood.* It seems from this and references in other Idylls that people ate flesh with blood still fresh in them.

400. *light in ports.* This shows that they had lighthouses at that time.

418. *sempu.* Its leaves, as well as its roots (cf. *P. Palai*, 1. 16) were eaten.

428. *valli dance.* The literal translation is unfading *valli* dance (வாடா-வள்ளி). This means the dance called *valli* which is different from the vine which, of course, withers.

Tiruveha. This is one of the 108 shrines of Vishnu, and was situated at Kanchi.

438-440. For the similes see Introduction : Similes.

447-448. *resemble much—dragon.* This is a comparison with something fictitious. Such a simile is called *Illporulyuvamai* (இல்பொருளுவமை), lit. comparison with that which does not exist.

453. *local god.* Vishnu.

471. *The four-faced god.* Brahma.

482-489 and 497-506. For these similes see Introduction : Similes.

514. *Threefold sea.* (முந்நீர்). Various interpretations have been given for this phrase : (1) The sea that contains three kinds of water, viz. of rivers, the springs, and the rain. (2) The sea that existed before the land (முன்னீர்). (3) The sea that has three functions : that of creating, destroying, and preserving the land. The last explanation is preferred by the commentator. Cf. *M. Kanchi*, 1. 75.

533. *the beauteous queen.* The Mother goddess.

534. *red god.* Muruga, the war god.

535. *the cruel demon killed.* See Introduction to Allusions.

538. *rules prescribed.* Music was reduced to a science in those times.

544. *jumbu fruit.* Jumbu is the *naval* tree. Navaltivu was the continent of *naval* trees so-called because these trees were abundant in it. This continent was supposed to be the centre of the seven continents which composed the earth. Hence the word came to mean the whole earth. This term was applied to the region south of the Himalayas.

564. *Bees do not hum.* Because the lotus blooms are artificial. *Cf. P. A. Padai,* 1. 196-197.

576—end. Note the fine pen-pictures of Nature.

SIRUPARNATTUPADAI

SIRUPARNATTUPADAI

INTRODUCTION

NAME

Siruparnattupadai means a poem giving guidance to a *panan* or bard who plays on a small (*siru*) *yal*. Another interpretation is a short poem, etc. The former is the more probable explanation. (For explanation of *panan* and *attupadai* see General Introduction to *Pattupattu : Attupadai*).

SUBJECT MATTER

A band of *panars* and their womenfolk are travelling in the heat of the day. A *panan* who has received rich presents from the chieftain, Nalliakodan, meets them and recommends them to go to this patron. He compares him with other patrons, such as the Chera, Chola and Pandya kings, and other chieftains: Pakan, Pari, Kari, Aye, Athikan, Nalli and Ori. He admits that all of them are distinguished for their munificence, but that Nalliakodan is superior to them all. He describes the villages and towns through which these *panars* have to go to

reach his palace and capital.
his unbounded generosity, and

He sings the praises of his valour,
his extreme kindness to minstrels.
Incidentally, the poet describes Madura, the capital of the Pandyas ; Uranthai, at one time the capital of the Chola kingdom ; and Vanchi, the capital of the Chera kings. He also describes the rule of minor chieftains.

SOCIAL LIFE

We may gather the following information in the poem about the social life of the people. The *panar* women do not seem to have had much clothing, as otherwise their anatomy could not have been so minutely described. However, they were not unaccustomed to clothing, as it is said that they were given garments by the king. But it is curious to note that they did not stint themselves in ornaments. They painted their faces, and applied perfumes to their hair which was braided into plaits. Children played with rattles made of oysters filled with pearls, and monkeys were kept as pets. Women were not secluded, and we are told that they bathed publicly in the sea-waves. They

were, however, gentle and modest, and invited strangers to be their guests through their children. The description of female beauty is a common theme with Tamil poets, and in this poem the *panar* women, the Ein women, and those in the *marutham* region are graphically described. Discoloured spots in the skin, instead of being thought of as a blemish, are referred to as beauty spots. Another characteristic on which Tamil poets insist is chastity in women. As to men, it was presumably a different thing. They could have mistresses, as had the king who was surrounded by beautiful women.

Toddy was a common beverage. That the people of those times reduced their dietary to a science may be inferred from the allusion to a treatise on food written by Bhima, one of the Pandavas. This was called *Bhimapagam*. Venison, white rice, *tinai*, *kayal* fish, and crabs are mentioned as articles of food. Rice was pounded, as now, with long pestles with iron rims at the ends.

NALLIAKODAN AND HIS KINGDOM

Nalliakodan is the patron referred to in this poem. He was one of the minor kings that ruled over a part of the Chola kingdom after the fall of the Chola dynasty. The poem says that he was the ruler of Mavilangai. His virtues are recounted in lines (tr.) 272-284. Very little is known about him except the accounts given in the poem.

Mavilangai, the poem says, was called after ancient Lanka. Lanka or Ilankai was a common name applied to a number of places in India. It was especially applied to Ravana's Lanka, generally understood as Ceylon. The Mavilangai referred to in the poem probably corresponds to the North Arcot district of the present day. The fact that Velur is mentioned lends colour to this view. Kanchi or Kanchipuram mentioned in the *P. P. Padai* as the capital of Ilanthirayan also was in this kingdom. (See Introduction to *P. P. Padai*).

The following towns are mentioned in the poem. One is said to be a town " whose name implies a fortified town." This no doubt is Eyilpattinam. It is said to be in the sea-coast, and so may have been a sea-port. Another is Velur, so named because of a legend noted in the poem, according to which Muruga used the flowers of a pond in battle, which changed into victorious spears (*vel*). Amur is another town, and it is spoken of as a Brahmin settlement. Incidentally, other cities and towns are also mentioned: Vanchi, the capital of the Chera kingdom; Uranthai, the former capital of the Cholas; and Madura, the capital of the Pandyas:

> A glorious town of great renown in which
> The Tamil language flourishes secure.

Another is Korkai, the sea-port of Madura; and at one time the capital of the Pandyan kingdom. In ancient days it was a great sea-port known to foreigners, the centre of the pearl trade with the West.

LITERARY MERITS

The most striking pen-pictures in the poem is

that of the starving *panar* woman cooking her meagre meal. The following are other realistic touches: the description of the beauty of *panar* women; the buffalo feeding in the Chera kingdom; the beauties of the Chola land

Realistic Pictures

> Where bees amative wave their wings and chant
> The sweet tune *kamaram* with their dear mates
> Round golden pericarps, surrounded by
> Red petals that resemble pretty hands
> With red lac stained of the sacred lotus blooms
> That look like faces bright;

the villages of fishermen; Velur's beauty spots; fertile tracts of Amur; and the concluding description of the hilly country of the chieftain:

> The summits of the hills
> Are difficult to reach, and climbed by paths
> The thunder bolts have cleared.

Nature

The above passage and the similes noted below show what a great lover of Nature the poet is. He has watched the rains that gently fall, the sun pouring down its fiery rays on a summer's day, the fresh-blown *kongu* buds, the teeth-like blooms of the *mullai* plant, the wreath-like flowers of the *kadamba*, the golden-hued *serenthai*, the *punnai's* pearl-like blossoms, *kaya's* blooms that look like a flock of peacocks, and the finger-like *kanthal* flowers.

The

Similes

opening lines of the poem contain some very striking similes. The rivers that flow from opposite directions on the hills and join together are compared to a

pearl necklace on the neck of Mother Earth. The black sands of the river banks in which flowers lie scattered resemble the black locks of a woman adorned with flowers. In

these we may notice more than one point of comparison. Again, we have a string of similes in the description of the female singers. Such a string is called in Tamil *malaiyuvamai* (a garland of similes).

Their locks are compared to rain clouds; their general appearance to peacocks; their small feet to the tongues of panting dogs (a very arresting simile); their close-set thighs, to the trunks of elephants; their matted hair to the unopened flower (*potthi*) of plantain bunches; their beauty-spots to *vengai* blooms and to fresh-blown *kongu* buds; their teeth to the pulps (*nongu*) of young palmyra fruits; and their looks to those of modest deer. There is in this string of comparisons a feature not to be found in any other Idyll. A word in one comparison is taken up and carried to the next with a different meaning; and, again, a word in this is taken on to a third, and so on. Such a device is called *ottaimanimalai* (a single-necklace simile). Most of the other similes are simpler. We may note a few prominent ones in addition to those noted under Realistic Pictures and Nature. The swarm

of humming bees that settle on lotus flowers is compared to the serpent obscuring the moon. Such a comparison made with something fictitious is known by the term *illporuluvamai* (இல்பொருளுவமை) in Tamil. The red claws of the elephants kicking away dead bodies are compared to the shining teeth of laughing ghouls that feed on corpses. The strings of the *yal* could be made tight or loose as a snake loosens or tightens its hold on a monkey it has caught. The wheels of a chariot with its slender spokes look like the rays of the shining moon engirt with a halo in winter. The peacock in the mountains spreading out its tail resembles a woman who spreads out her tresses in order to perfume them. *Akhil* firewood is like sleeping camels.

There are three hyperboles in the poem. The chest of Bhima is said to be as broad as the " snowy mount." The dust of the capital's streets is laid by the juice that drips from the cheeks of the ruttish elephant. The faces of the fishermen's wives are worthy of being envied by the moon itself.

THE AUTHOR

The author is Natthatthanar. The prefix *nat* meaning good is added to show the estimation in which he was held. He was a native of Idaikalikadu Nallur, a village south-west of Madras, known even now by that name. There are three bearing this name mentioned in literature: one in Tholkappiam, another as the author of a stanza in praise of Tiruvalluvar, and a third as the author of a treatise on grammar. Whether all these refer to one and the same person is a matter of conjecture.

DATE OF COMPOSITION

We do not have sufficient material for determining the period in which the poem was composed. Probably the poem is

one of the later Idylls and was composed about the

sixth century A.D. (See General Introduction to *Pattupattu:* Date of Composition).

VERSIFICATION

The poem is written in the usual *asiriappa* metre of the *agaval* verse. (For an explanation of this kind of verse see General Introduction : Versification).

SIRUPARNATTUPADAI

The rivers wild that wave-tost come from afar
Together join, and like a rope of pearls
The bamboo shoulders fair of Mother Earth
Adorn. On river banks are fragrant groves
Whose blooms pecked at by cuckoos fall and fade. The
dusky sands that on them lie look like
A woman's spread-out locks. The gravel stones
That lie on them are with the scorching sun
Made hot, and have, like javelins, edges sharp.
They pierce the female singers' feet and make
Them slowly walk. When on a summer's day
The sun pours down its fiery rays, they rest
Beneath the *kadamba* tree's grateful shade
That stands on the barren tract of desert hot,
Through which a never-ending path doth stretch.

These female singers' locks are rubbed with oil
That well resemble rains that gently fall.
The peacocks that display their feath'ry tails
Bedecked with eye-like spangles green that shine
Like emeralds bright do imitate in vain
Their grace, and hide themselves among peahens.
Their feet undecked by ornaments appear
Like pretty tongues of dogs that pant quite tired
By running fast. Their close-set thighs look like
The thick trunk of the female elephant
Which it doth trail along the ground. Their locks
Are knotted looking like the blossoms fresh
Of plantain trees that grow on hills in rows.
The happy bees mistake their beauty spots
For thick-branched *vengu's* blooms worn in their locks,
And round them buzz. These widespread beauty spots
Upon their gem-set breasts do much excel
The fresh-blown *konku's* buds. Their teeth shine like
The juice of breast-shaped young palmyra fruits
That grow in clusters large. Their chastity
Entitles them to wear the teeth-like blooms

Of *mullai* plant that grows in *kullai* woods.
Their ways are gentle, and their looks appear
Like those of modest deer. Fair shining brows

They have. Boys immature do gently chafe
Their tired fair feet, so elegant and small.

(A minstrel thus exhorts a fellow bard):
O suppliant quite wise that doth not feel
The journey's pain! Because thou art impelled
By hateful and distressing poverty,
Thou dost desire to humbly pray for gifts
From bounteous patrons in this moving world.
Thy left hand doth support thy sweet-tuned *yal*
Set well with twisted strings that have the look
Of golden wires. Thou art accompanied
By a youthful expert trained to play with skill
On pleasing *palai yal* that's suited well
For playing the famous tune called *navalam*.

Well-watered Vanchi with its high tower gates
Is not so rich in giving bounteous gifts.
The chief of Kudda that a chariot owns
Rules over it. His shoulders are as strong
As pillars of iron. Once he overcame
His foes, and as a sign of victory great
Did plant his curved bow in the Himalayas,
The northern mountain. He is of the race
Of those that have protected Kudda's land.
There buffalos that tread upon sleek fish
And wide-mouthed feed upon the petals rich
Of water-lilies rest themselves on beds
Of jasmines wild that grow beneath the shade
Of the jak on which green pepper creepers grow,
And where the soft-leaved turmeric doth chafe

Their back. They feed on honey immature
That has a fragrant smell, and bellow loud.

Again, e'en Madura is poor in gifts,
The Pandy capital with spacious streets,
A glorious town of great renown, in which
The Tamil tongue doth flourish well secure.
The king's descent is from the line that guards
The southern lands. He has warred on his foes
And seized their lands. A white umbrella decked
With pearls is his, and pleasant garlands too.

The king too is the lord of Korkai's port
Whose boundaries are set by leaping waves.
There monkey pets that wear upon their breasts
Bright ornaments well-carved with chisels sharp
From chips of seasoned *numa* wood, whose blooms
Produce sweet honey, follow orderly
Salt traders' row of carts by strong bulls drawn
That wear around their ears wreaths made of cork.

These pets fill saw-edged oyster shells with pearls
Like women's teeth, and with these rattles play
With jewelled children of the traders' wives
Who own well-waving locks, and shoulders broad
That make up for their narrow waists.

Uranthai too is poor in gen'rous gifts.
Well-fortified, no one need flee from it.
It is the city of the Chola king
Belonging to the race that guards the East.
Its stable homes are set midst rice fields green.
There bees amative wave their wings and chant
The sweet tune *kamaram* with their dear mates
Round golden pericarps, surrounded by
Red petals that resemble pretty hands
With red lac stained of the sacred lotus blooms
That look like faces bright. Their buds appear
Like heaving breasts, and ope when pollens red
Like scarlet insects fall in showers great
From wreath-like blossoms of the *kadamba*
That grows so thick and high along the banks
Of numerous lakes containing waters cool.
His hands that shine with ornaments have wrought
Great havoc on his foes' high ramparts strong
Whose high tower gates the thunderbolt doth graze.
His fame is wide ; he rides in a chariot tall.

Besides these there are other patrons too.
There's Pakan, ruler of the mountain tracts,
A noted son of sturdy hunters' race,
That gave away his cloak to a peacock wet
That wandered on the wooded slopes of hills

Made fertile by the fall of timely rains.
There's Pari, mountain chief of Parampu,
On whose slopes shining white rills leap,
That gave away his chariot fine to prop
A tiny-blossomed *mullai* plant that stood
In the pathway long that ran through *naga* trees

SIRUPARNATTUPADAI

113

With fragrant blossoms laden, from which bees
Do gather honey. There is Kari too
Whose long and dreaded spear has an angry flash,
Who wears a shining bracelet on his wrist,
And who once gave to those who begged from him
White prancing horses bearing sounding bells.
His kingdom too he gave with gracious words
To the wonder of all men. There too is Aye
Whose shoulders strong that bear the bow are rubbed
With sandal paste. His kind words please all men.
To the god that sat beneath the banyan tree
He once gave as a present a garment blue
That a Naga weaver made. There's Athikan
Who wields in battle the long and flashing spear
That has a frightful look, who has an army great
Like the sounding sea, and who a present made
To Auvai once of sweet ambrosial fruits
Of the *nelli* tree that grows on mountain slopes
Where grow sweet-smelling flowers. And there again
Is Nalli frank who cheers his friends with gifts
Enabling them to live without a want,

Who owns the slopes of high-topped mountains great
On which blow winds that bring in timely rains,
And is distinguished in the use of arms.
There's Ori too who owned the horse whose name
Was Ori, who with Kari fought whose horse
Was Kari named, and who to actors gave
Rich low-hilled lands with *naga* trees mature
That have abundant fragrant blooms.

Great Nalliakodan who, as known to all
Throughout the world which the ocean great surrounds,
Bears all alone with might and strength of mind
His battles with success. A blameless life
He bears among good Mavilanka's kings—
Called often ancient Lanka from the time
It first was built, and hard to overthrow.
Here logs of fragrant *naga* tree and those
Of *akhil* and of sandalwood are found
That serve as rafts to women who disport
In sea-waves that do beat against the shore.
His sword inflicts grave wounds. A tiger's strength
Is his. By birth he is of the artist class.
His legs that bear war-anklets and are scarred
By urging elephants have never known

Retreat. His gen'rous hands with which he gave
As presents herds of elephants may be
Compared to clouds that bring abundant rains.
His patronage he grants to bards that play
On various instruments. To this great king
We went some days ago and wished to praise
His great, rare virtues and his father's wealth
In mountains high that rising touch the skies.

In the ruined kitchen lay the barking bitch
That whelped of late with bent-eared brood too young
To ope their eyes, that suck not the milkless teats.
Upon the earth piled up by ants that swarm
On the walls, on which the roof had fallen down,
Sprout mushrooms hollow. There that day the wife
Of the drummer with a lean and slender waist
And bangled wrists whom cruel hunger gnawed
Did saltless cook the herb her sharp nails plucked
From refuse heaps, and made a meal of it
With poor relations, having closed the door
Ashamed to be so seen by prying folk.
Such poverty was then by him removed,
And I returned with gifts of a chariot fine
And a small-eyed elephant of cruel strength
With ruttish cheeks and sides well-decked with bells.

Thou may'st go with a heart of confidence
With many of thy poor kin to the place
Whose name implies a town that's fortified,
Which thou wilt reach by road that passes through
The sea-coast tract. There hamlets thou wilt find
Surrounded by the emerald sea, and ponds
Of waters cool. The screw-pines washed by waves
Have flowers as white as swans. The *serenthai*
In early spring has blossoms golden-hued.
The flowers that bloom on pregnant thorn-bush look
Like shinng emerald, and the *punnai* tree
So tall has blossoms that resemble pearls.
The sea-waves wash the white sands of the shore.
Then sing the glories of that worthy king
Who wears a garland made of opened buds
And is the ruler over Kidangu,
Where gardens are with gay flower clusters filled.
Thou and thy women dancers that keep time
To the music of the flute will there receive
From fishermen fried *kulal* fish ; with it

The cheering toddy cooked o'er glowing fire
Emitting smoke from fragrant *akhil* wood
Of sleeping camel's shape brought o'er the seas.
These are prepared by dames of *nulai* caste
With shoulders broad, and faces beautiful
Which the moon itself would envy, and with eyes
That are as piercing as sharp pointed spears.
Approaching Velur thou wilt find the tank
Whose blossoms pointed like the spear once served
As conqu'ring spears, and won a victory great.
Fresh-blooded blossoms coral-red appear
On *avarai* plants. Dark-budded *kaya's* blooms
Look pretty like a flock of peacocks gay.
Rich *musundai* displays its ball-like buds.
Rich clustered *kanthal* blooms like fingers look.

The rains fall on the forest's weary paths.
The sun conceals its rays behind the hills
From which leap streams in caves of *mullai* woods.
This land's the type of patience. Thou wilt get
There tasty, sour, hot rice that is prepared
By women of the Eyin race in huts
To which those suffering from the heat retire.
And eat fried venison with women fair
Whose skin is like the mango's tender leaves,
And who wear bangles small.

Thou wilt find Amur well supplied with priests,
Secure, surrounded by a pleasant moat,
And placed midst green fields of the *marutham* land,
The type of lovers' quarrels. Here doth sit
The emerald-hued kingfisher on the twigs
Of short-stemmed *kanchi's* branches ordered well,
Resembling garlands made of morning blooms,
And watch the moving waters of the stream
For long, from which strong-smelling *kayal* fish
It snatches. Here the opening morning buds
Of green-leaved, thorn-stemmed lotus torn by it,
Upon which settle swarms of honey bees,
Resemble the moon when by the dragon black
It's hidden. Here a bangled dame with locks
That fall upon her narrow back in plaits
Appearing like the trunks of elephants,
The sister of the tiller wise whose bulls
Are sturdy, strong-necked, and of stately walk,
Will through her children ask thee properly

To be her guest. She will thee feed with paps
Of white rice pounded with strong pestles black
With well-worn rims of iron, and serve with it
A dish of forked-foot crabs.

The streets of the king's old town where feats are held
Are dustless, as the dust is laid by the juice

Of superb, huge-legged elephants that spurn
The corpses killed by them. Their red claws shine
Like the glistening teeth of laughing ghouls that feed

On corpses and have cloven feet, long tongues
That flame-like slant, and black goat's ears.
This town is near, and is not far away.

Thou may'st approach the gate appearing like
The opened eye of the Mount where gods reside.
It is not shut to dancers, bards, and priests
That teach the Holy Writ. But others find
His palace not so easy of access.

His close and wise friends praise his gratitude,
His kindly face, and pleasant ways. And men
Reputed experts in the use of arms
Well praise his generosity to foes
That dread him much, his lack of wrath prolonged,
His courage when he faces foes, and the help
He renders to the vanquished ones. Fair dames
With painted eyes exalt his actions prompt,
His great attractiveness, his strength of will,
And ready sympathy with needy ones.
The suppliants who beg for gifts well praise
His grant of gifts according to the needs
Of each without stint. So approach the prince
Who shines among a band of pleasing dames
Like the milk-white moon that shines amidst the stars.

Thou may'st then play the tunes that well conform
To rules of music on the sweet-toned *yal*.
Joined to the pretty handle is a set
Of strings that could be made or loose or tight
E'en as a snake does with its folds when caught
By a green-eyed monkey black. The well-made head
Has a row of gem-like nails that join their sides,
And looks like a paunch. The *yal* is so well made
That one could well play on it many tunes

That please. The *yal* is set with twisted strings
And drop sweet nectar honey-like. There is
O'er it a cover coloured like the fruit
Of *kumil* tree that in the forest grows.

Thou may'st then utter words extolling him
As one who venerates with folded palms
The old, and folds the young too to his breast
With joy, who wisely wields his sceptre so
That farmers of his land that hold the plough
Do prosper well, and who wounds with his spear
The chieftains that in chariots ride.

Ere thou dost do this he will make thee wear

A spotless dress that shines like bamboo bark,
And give thee toddy strong that stupefies
Like poison of the snake. In golden plates
That much surpass the morning sun that lights
The sky engirt with planets, he will serve
The many dishes suited to thy taste.
These are prepared according to the rules
Found in a treatise that a hero wrote,
Whose chest was as broad as the snowy Mount,
A brother of that hero great who wore
A flowery girdle and a quiver full
Of arrows that a forest set on fire.
With great and anxious care he will thee feed.

He drives away his foes from their domains
With his victorious valour, and destroys
The settled fortresses of chiefs that bear
The spear. The poverty of those distressed
And the need of singers he relieves, and gives.
As gifts the booty rare his captains take.
He makes a present of a chariot fine
That rolls with ease and proved quite fit by use
And has a hub well-carved with chisels sharp.
Its wheels are set with slender spokes that look
Like milk-white rays shed by the silv'ry moon
Engirt with halo bright, in season cold.
It is enclosed with boards that painted are
With melted red lac and with figures wrought
By workmen skilled, resembling opened buds
On sky-high boughs of *murungai* trees.
A bull with shining face and shapely legs

He adds, and a driver too. He sends thee then
With other gifts besides.

These thou wilt have, if thou dost go with zeal
To Nalliakodan who has virtues great
And worthy of enduring praise. He wears
Fine garlands of well-chosen blossoms made.
He is the king of *kurinchi's* region high
Where waving bamboos grow on lofty hills.
On these bright clouds do creep, and peacocks spread
Upon their shining slopes their gem-like tails
Resembling locks spread out to be perfumed
By fair soft-shouldered dames whose waists are clothed,
And who are frail. The summits of the hills
Are difficult to climb, and reached by paths
The thunderbolts have cleared.

NOTES

1-7. For the similes see Introduction.

16-17.

16-41.

locks — rains. The point of comparison is brightness.

Description of female beauty.

21. *hide themselves.* Out of a sense of inferiority they and look like peahens.

fold their feather

23. *tongues — pant.* This exquisite simile is *Padai*, l. 55, and *M. P. Kadam*, ll. 50-51.

repeated in *P. A.*

24-39. For the peculiar similes see Introduction.

36-37. *Entitles — mullai.* Mullai flower is the symbol of chastity.

52. *palai yal.* This instrument is peculiar to the palai region.

53. *navalam.* One of the fine tunes. Cf. *kamaram*, l. 98.

54. *Vanchi.* This town is in the Chera country.

55. *Is not so rich.* Rich, but not equal to Nalliakodan's capital.

56. *Kudda.* The Chera country.

60. *plant—Himalayas.* Probably an exaggeration. Cf. *M. Kanchi*, ll. 67-68.

63-70. A fine pen-picture.

74. *Tamil — flourishes.* Madura was the centre of
It is said to be the seat of the Tamil Sangham.

77. *umbrella.* A sign of kingship.

Tamil learning.

79. *Korkai.* A famous sea-port of
capital before Madura. It was noted for
l. 127.

the Pandyan kingdom and its
its pearl trade. Cf. *M. Kanchi*,

81. *monkey pets.* A topical allusion.

87. *pearls.* See note on l. 78.

91. *make up — waists.* A paraphrase of the
is that the wide breasts make up for the narrowness of

text. The meaning
their waists.

92. *Uranthai.* A former capital of the Chola kingdom
before Kaveri-
pattinam. The site is now called Uraiyur, a part of the
Cf. *P. Palai*, l. 357.
Trichinopoly town.

96. *rice fields.* The Chola kingdom was mostly land.

marutham (field)

98. *sweet tune kamaram.* Cf. l. 53.

115, 118, 120. These incidents show the generous hearts of the respective chiefs. Are they hyperboles to bring out their boundless generosity ?

118. *Pari.* This chieftain is well-known, as Kapilar his munificence, and is said to have helped his daughters See Introduction to *K. Pattu* : The Author.

has sung about after his death.

135. *a Naga — gave.* Lit. The cobra gave. But seems to be the right interpretation.

the translation

156. *Mavilanga.* See Introduction : Nalliakodan.

157. *Called — Lanka.* Perhaps owing to the similarity of the places.

161. *serve as rafts.* The logs were used as help in swimming.

165. *war-anklets.* These anklets were worn as a sign of distinction in war.

175-186. The finest pen-picture in the poem. Notice the description.

how detailed is

193. *town — fortified.* Eyilpattinam. Eyil means fortified.

212. *akhil wood.* This came probably from Burma.

216. *moon — envy.* A hyperbole.

218. *Velur.* Modern Vellore.

220. *won a victory.* Nalliakodan was told in a dream by Muruga that he could conquer his enemies by throwing the flowers of a certain pond at his enemies. He did so, and the flowers changing into spears helped him to defeat his foes.

229. *type of patience.* Each of the five regions had a special quality associated with it. *Irrutthal* (patience) is the characteristic of the *mullai* region. See Introduction to *Pattupattu*: *Agam* and *Puram.*

236. *priests.* Amur was a Brahmin settlement. There were such settlements in several places in the Dravidian country before the advent of the Aryans.

239. *type — quarrels.* *Udal* (sulkiness) is the characteristic *marutham* region. See note on l. 229.

248. An instance of *Illporuluvamai.* See Introduction.

of the

256. *pestles.* The same kind of pestles are used now.

260. *dust — juice.* A hyperbole.

263-265. *laughing ghouls, etc.* Revolting pictures are *T. M. A. Padai*, ll. 73-87 and *M. Kanchi*, ll. 26-38.

also found in

272-283. Ideal characteristics of a prince.

290-291. For another simile for the same thing see *M. P. Kadam*, ll. 30-31. Cf. *P. P. Padai*, ll. 19-20.

302. *young*. The Commentator interprets it as referring to This does not fit the context: The point here is that he caressed as well as fought with grown-ups,

soldiers.
children

308. *dress — bark*. The art of weaving was much advanced in those days. Cf. *M. P. Kadam*, ll. 732-733 ; *P. A. Padai*, l. 103.

314-315. *rules — wrote*. For the allusion see Introduction: Social Life.

316. *broad as the snowy mount*. A hyperbole.

335. *workman skilled*. Note the development of architecture in those days.

345. *bamboos — mountains*. An oft-repeated expression.

NEDUNALVADAI

NEDUNALVADAI

INTRODUCTION

NAME

Nedunalvadai

North Wind here

literally means Good Long North Wind.. by metonymy stands for the Cold Season. The poem describes the cold season in country and town. It is called "long", because the season seems long to the wife who is eagerly awaiting the arrival of her absent husband.

SUBJECT MATTER

This poem resembles *Mullaipattu* very much. The wife of a warrior, probably the queen of the Pandyan king,

Agam lies in her beautiful palace in a bed of exquisite workmanship, bewailing the absence of her lord who is away in the battle-field. She has put away her splendid ornaments and dress. Her attendants try to console her by saying that her husband will return soon. But she is inconsolable. They pray to the war-goddess that her husband might return soon after conquering his enemies.

Puram As in *Pattinapalai* and *Mullaipattu*, the *puram* element predominates in this poem. There are splendid passages describing the cold season in country places and the city, probably Madura. Rains fall abundantly, and in the rural parts people, animals and birds shiver with the cold. The rice plant and the areca palm grow luxuriantly. The scene shifts to the city. Sturdy bodyguards walk about the streets care-free and drunk, not minding the rain. Gay women also enjoy themselves and offer their evening sacrifices. But, in general, the people shut up their houses, put away their ornaments, and warm themselves with fires. Women mourn the absence of their husbands who are away at the seat of war. There is a detailed description of the palace: the queen's apartments, the ramparts, the high gates, the courtyards and the fountains. The most important part of the *puram* element is

at the end, where the king is in the camp. He seems to be quite absorbed in his war work. He walks through the camp at dead of night, and inspects the wounded animals and soldiers to whom he speaks kind words.

SOCIAL LIFE

The following are facts that may be gleaned in the poem about the life, customs, and manners of ancient Tamils.

In the cold season people warmed themselves with fire-pans, and used smoke-pans in which they burnt fragrant things to keep themselves from catching cold.

There were foreigners in the Tamil country, some of whom were employed as bodyguards. They were sturdy, well-built men who drank toddy. Others were Yavanas who were employed

at the time for doing artistic work, such as statues bearing lamps in their hands. These were either Greeks or Romans, with the latter of whom the Tamils had trade relations. notes on Yavanas see Introductions to *Pattupattu* *pattu*).

(For further
and *Mullai*-

Poor women wore chank bracelets and strings for protection against evil spirits. Richer women wore ornaments of gold and pearls. The queen removes all her ornaments except her *thali* (wedding tie), puts away her silk dress, and wears ordinary clothes in the absence of her husband.

This is a custom that
persists even at the
explained, is that a
alone.
present day. The Tamil idea, it may be
wife adorns herself to please her husband

Dancing was a popular art of the time. Here we are told of dancing girls who sing to the accompaniment of lutes. There was no seclusion of women in those times, and yet the queen's apartments could not be entered by males except the king. The round bedstead of the times is described in great detail.

Women were careful about their daily devotions, lighting their lamps at sunset and worshipping the gods with offerings of rice and flowers.

As in *Mullaipattu* we are given a glimpse of the life of warfare of the time: the solicitude of the king for his wounded soldiers and animals; the instruments of war and the camp.

Religion

The goddess to whom prayer is made is Kotravi, the Dravidian goddess of war. At the same time there is mention of two Aryan goddesses: Lakshmi whose figure is carved on door-posts, and Rohini whose picture is painted on the bed's tent. This was an age of tran-

sition in which the Dravidian gods and goddesses were being amalgamated with those of the Aryan pantheon.

Aryan Influence

That Aryan influence had begun to penetrate the Tamil land may be inferred from the following references:—(1) "Those versed in architecture" is probably a reference to *silpa sastra* introduced by the Aryans. (2) "The beam that bears the name of a star" is a reference to the cross-beam of a door-post which in Sanskrit is called *uttara katkavi*. Hence *uttaram*, a Sanskrit derivative, means in Tamil a beam. *Uttara* is the name of a star.

(3) "Room . . . named after the womb" is a

reference to the Sanskrit *garbha graha* which literally means womb-like abode, and is usually applied to the innermost part of a temple. Although *karpam*, a Sanskrit derivative, is used in Tamil, the pure Tamil word for a womb is *karu*.

(4) The expression *dasa nanku* is a combination of the Sanskrit *dasa*, ten, and the Tamil *nanku*, four. The phrase literally means four times ten.

(5) "The strong-horned Ram" refers to the first constellation of the Aryan Zodiac. In Sanskrit it is *meisam*, a ram. In the poem it is called by the Tamil word *adu* which means the same thing.

(6) Rohini and Kotravi have already been noted.

LITERARY MERITS

Nedunalvadai's popularity is largely due to the wonderful

Pen Pictures

pen-picture of the cold season at the beginning of the poem. How shepherds and sheep suffer; how people warm their shivering hands in the fire and apply them to their cheeks; how people give up their festive things and warm themselves before fire-pans and smoke-pans burning incense in them to keep out the cold; how rice plants and areca palms grow luxuriantly in this season; how foreign bodyguards drunk with toddy walk about in the streets bedecked with garlands; how women given up to gaiety stroll about the city; how dancing girls warm the strings of their *yals* by rubbing them against their breasts: these are all told with a vivid realism and wealth of detail that cannot be easily surpassed.

The fountains playing in terraces is a delightful picture. The queen is described in great detail: her ornaments, her dress and her haggard looks in her loneliness. There, again, is the description of the fine physical features of the attendant women.

The picture of the king inspecting the camp is a splendid piece of painting in words. The king going about at midnight leaning on the shoulders of a youth, with a war-horse led before him; the torch's flame slanting south impelled by the cold north wind; a captain armed with a lance pointing out the wounded men and elephants; the words of cheer spoken to the soldiers by the king: these are brought before us so vividly that we can almost see a war-camp of olden days with our mental eyes.

The description of the palace is another piece of delightful realism. But we may observe that the description of the queen's bedstead is rather prosy, though finely worded, and detract somewhat from the sustained interest of the rest of the poem, as do the description of the camp in the *Mullaipattu* and the catalogue of flowers in the *Kurinchipattu*.

Nature

The opening lines of the poem are not only a superb piece of realism, but also shows how the poet reacted to the sights and sounds around him. The description of the areca palm is a gem:

> The clusters that emerge
> From the sheath-ed spathes around the emerald necks
> Of wide-stemmed areca palms contain green nuts
> Whose sides with clear juice filled do rounded swell
> And ripen into sweet and fine-sapped fruits.

Other instances of the poet's appreciative eye for Nature are: the graceful leaves of the rice plants bending with ripened ears; the jasmine's fragrance indicating that it is evening; the *kanthal* garlands drenched in rain; the golden gourd unfolding its blossoms and the clouds circling the hills.

As regards animals and birds, we note the cows that spurn their young; the cranes with their green feet devouring carps; the dove standing now on one leg and now on the other (what a realistic touch!); male yaks and short-legged swans gambolling in front of the palace-yard; the elephant carrying lofty flags; the peacock crying loudly and lonely, horses neighing disdaining their fodder. The elephant seems to be a *sine qua non* with the ancient poets.

Imagery : Similes

This poem does not contain any elaborate or long drawn out simile. But we note at least seventeen simple similes. The stem of the areca palm is compared to emerald necks; the streets of the city are as wide as the river; the women's teeth are like pearls; the tower-gates are so large that they look like the tunnels of hills; the mingled sounds before the palace are like the noise that proceed from the hills; the lime-washed walls

look like silver; the pillars are dark like blue sapphire and shine like burnished brass; the space between the bed and the rounded balls of the legs is shaped like garlic bulb; the rounded balls of the leg of the bed are like the breasts of pregnant women; the lonely queen looks like an uncoloured picture; the complexion of the attendant maids is like the colour of mango shoots and their breasts are like lotus buds; and the tent-poles are like milkless breasts. (See Introduction to *Pattinapalai* about description of female beauty).

There are no hyperboles in the poem. The simile, "walls as high as hills" is only highly-coloured language such as we use in ordinary speech.

THE AUTHOR

The author is the famous poet, Nakkirar. He is also called Kirar (learned poet), and Natkirar (good Kirar). He was the son of a schoolmaster of Madura. Some writers say that he was a Brahmin, and others, that he was a Vellala. It is difficult to say exactly when he lived. No doubt he was a Sangham poet. Indeed, such was his profound scholarship and poetic genius that he is said to have presided over the deliberation of that august assembly. That he was a contemporary of Kapilar is known by his appreciative remarks about that great poet. Nakkirar was noted for his sturdy independence bordering on obstinacy, as is evident from the legend that he dared to contradict Siva himself, and was punished for it. His style is dignified and elegant. Two of his poems are extant: *Tirumurugattupadai* and this poem. There are some other poems and a prose commentary on Irayanar Agaporul attributed to him, but modern scholarship regards them as spurious. That there is a temple at Madura dedicated to the poet, and an image on the hill of Thiruparamkundam shows with what veneration the Tamil world has held him. (For further notes on the poet see Introduction to *T. M. Padai*).

DATE OF COMPOSITION

All we can say is that the poem was composed in the Sangham period, judging from internal evidence. We do not know who the *vendan* (king) described in the poem is. According to the great Commentator, he is Neduncheliyan. All that is said about him is that his captain's lance is decorated with the leaves of the neem (margosa). So the chieftain may have been a Pandyan king. (For further discussion of the subject see Introductions to *Pattupattu* and *Mullaipattu*).

VERSIFICATION

The versification, as in *Mullaipattu*, is *asiriappa* metre peculiar to the *agaval* verse. See Introductions to *Pattupattu* and *Mullaipattu*.

NEDUNALVADAI

When clouds to season true do circle hills
To the right and pour down copious showers new,
The earth is cooled, and herdsmen that do dread
The rain and wield their cruel wands, their herd
Of mated sheep and cattle scatter wide

To graze on unknown pasture grounds. Distressed,
These lonely feel in leaving wonted fields.

Long-petalled *kanthal* buds disfigured are
By the fall of rains. All people suffer much
From cold that bites their bodies, and they warm
Their hands before the fire, and shivering much

Apply the heat to warm their cheeks. The beasts
Forget to graze; the monkey shivering sits;
The birds that perch on trees drop down from them.
The cows now rudely spurn from them their young.
The midnight chill is like the cold on hills.
On every bush the slender-tendrilled vine
With blossoms round and white and the golden gourd
Unfold their blooms. The cranes whose feet are green
With plumage soft and red-striped herons too
That after rains arise from whitish sands

That cover dark clay soil, do everywhere
Devour the carps that live in streams and swim
Against the current strong. From the wide expanse
The spreading white clouds send their drizzling drops.
The fruitful fine-leaved rice plants that abound
In lovely, broad, well-flooded fields, do bend
With ripened ears. The clusters that emerge
From sheath-ed spathes around the emerald necks
Of wide-stemmed areca palms contain green nuts
Whose sides with clear juice filled do rounded swell
And ripen into sweet and fine-sapped fruits.
On flower-filled hill-tops of wide groves are trees
On whose boughs hang fine drops of shining rain.

In an ancient town that's rich in mansions high
Are streets broad as a stream, on which there walk
Big sturdy men that do flower garlands wear,
Whose shoulders broad are fair and strong, whose frames
Are well-knit ; free from care they seem to be.
Their clothes hang carelessly on both their sides.
They merry are with toddy drunk in which
Bees take delight, nor mind the drops of rain.
Chank bracelets women wear that fit them well.
Smooth are their shoulders, and their features, soft ;
Like pearls, their teeth. Their noble, tender eyes
Well suit their shining ear-rings. Modest are
Their ways. They know it's evening from the scent
Of petals of the shapely jasmine buds
With tender stalks they heap upon flower trays.
They light the wicks of iron lamps well-oiled,

Strew rice and flowers and do adore the gods.
At eve they walk about the merchants' streets.

As day, like night, is dark, the domestic dove
Whose feet are red does not dare stir abroad
In search of food with its dear loving mate,
But on the cornice stands, on one leg now,
And now on the other helpless. Servants young
In broad well-guarded houses are engaged
In humble work. They various perfumes grind
On fragrant grinding stones as black as gram.
White mill-stones from the North now lie unused,
And so, the Southern paste of sandal-wood.
Fair women wear not garlands on their hair,
But are content their tresses dark to deck
With flowers few, and on kindling fires they pour
Good cooling unguents. To raise a fume
They use dark, hard *akhil* and sugar white.
The red artistic fan by skilled men made
Lies now encased and hung on a curv-ed peg,
And covered with the spider's cob-web white.
On upper storeys rising to the skies
The window that admits the northern wind
Within the bed-room at the prime of spring
Unopened lies ; the strong well-fitted doors
Are bolted fast unused. The noisy drops
Of rain are scattered wide, and no one drinks
From pitchers narrow-mouthed ; but all enjoy
The warmth of fires that glow in censers lit

Fair dancing girls to keep their songs in tune
With small and dark-stemmed *yals* on which they play
Warm the sweet-toned strings made useless by the cold
By rubbing them upon their swelling breasts.
The women mourn the absence of their mates.
Abundant rains thus bring in the season cold.

The broad sun travelling in its western course
Its widespread rays diffuses everywhere,
And shadows cast by two poles planted straight
Do not incline at noon-tide either way.
Then architects with care compute with tapes,
And note the quarters where the gods reside.
They mansions build befitting noted kings,
And raise around them ramparts strong and high.
They make huge folding-doors with bolts secure,
And rivet them with massive, strong iron bands.
They paint these doors with bright red lac. They cross
The door-posts tall with beams that bear the name
Of a star. Upon it water-lilies fresh
Are carved, and joined with these on either side
Are female elephants. This is the work
Of men well skilled who could make gapless joints.
The posts are smeared with ghee and mustard white.
The tower gates much resemble tunnels wide

In hills, and large enough for tuskers huge
To pass through bearing high victorious flags.
And here the sacred goddess has her seat.

The palace yard is strewn with sand, where play
Long-haired and white male yaks with short-legged swans.
The many long-maned horses that disdain
Their stables and their fodder lonely neigh.
This sound is mingled with the music made
By founts whose water turbid overflows
From ornamental, wide-mouthed knobs that stand In
long, white terraces, where moon-light bright
Shines pleasantly. Heard too the horn-like sound Of
the tender peacock proud that loudly cries,
Its long tail closed. These sounds resemble much The
noise that issues from high crowded hills.

In an inner room attractive to the sight
Which bears a name that means a womb, there burns
A lamp with a statue of artistic work
Whose hands support a vessel full of oil

By Yav'nas made. The thick wick brightly burns
With high red-coloured flame. From time to time
It's trimmed to rid the halls of wide-spread gloom.
This is a stately mansion which no male
Except the king could enter, girt by walls
As high as hill-tops ; flags wave everywhere
Of the colours of the rainbow seen on hills.
The long wall washed with lime like silver shines.
The strong and rounded pillars are as dark
As sapphire blue and shine like burnished brass.
On it is wrought a vine with many blooms.

There is a forty years' old rounded bed
Constructed with smooth-chiselled tusks that once
Belonged to tuskers huge with mighty legs
Resembling drums and shapely foreheads grey,
Renowned in war, which were in battle killed.
This bed is decked with leaves that experts carved
With chisels sharp. This wide imposing bed
On strong legs stands made up of rounded knobs
Well-joined, resembling breasts of pregnant dames.
Between, the spaces have the garlic shape.
Around the bed are pearls on fine threads strung
That look like lattice-work. To fill the space
Between, the frames are bound with coloured tapes
With tiger stripes, and many-coloured hair
Is spread on them. Above these, boards are set
Portraying scenes such as the hunt of a lion.
Again, above these *mullai* buds that grow
In forests wide and other blooms are strewn.

On this a mattress made of pure white down
Of mated swan is placed, and pillows too.
Above all this a sheet washed white and starched

Is spread with gay flower petals o'er it strewn.

The lady parted from her lord now wears,
On the fair, round-breasted bosom on which hung

A pearl-strung necklace once, the marriage-tie alone.
Her locks uncombed lie on her forehead fair.

Her small-holed ears that bear the pendant marks
Hang slightly down as she has put away

Her long and shining ear-rings. On her wrists
That were adorned with bangles, she now wears

Two bracelets made of right-whorled chank, and twines
Around her hand a simple string. She wears

A red ring round her crimson finger shaped
Like the fish's mouth. Her rounded hips that once
Were draped with lovely raiments are now clothed
With a faded garment made of shiny threads.
She looks like a picture drawn without the paint.
Soft maids complexioned like the mango shoot,
Whose skins have patches wide of beauty spots,
Whose soft, round shoulders are like bamboo smooth,
Whose breasts that look like lotus buds are bound
With ribbons tight, whose waists are round and slight,
Now chafe their mistress' feet. Attendants too

Pink-faced, with iron-grey tresses, fine and soft,
Good words of comfort to their mistress speak,
And tell her things that are untrue and true
Consoling her. They give assurance firm
Her dear spouse will with speed return from war.

Strong round-shaped tent-poles that resemble much
Young milkless breasts, and overlaid with paste
Are to the bed-posts joined. And on the tent
O'erspread with wax is painted well the sky
With the radiant moon that differs from the sun
That moves among bright groups of stars, such as
The strong-horned Ram. The wife notes Rohini
That constant is found always with the moon,
And envies much her bliss, and deeply sighs.
She wipes away with finger red her tears
That gath'ring in her eyes drop from her lids.
Her maid prays : " Mother, grant him victory great,
And end the war, and thus remove the thoughts
That greatly pain the loving, lonely wife."

The king inspects outside the tent the wounds
Bright swords inflicted on heroic men
Who did the day before in fray cut down
The long trunks thick and huge of elephants
Well-trained in war and decked with frontlets bright.
The cold north wind impels the torch's flame
That stands supported on round shapely frames
To slant its trembling tongues much to the south.
A captain armed with a lance whose haft is strong,
Whose head is bound with blossoms of the neem,
Goes with the king, and points out one by one
The wounded men. Behind, a prancing steed
Equipped with little bells and bridles large,

And saddled, shakes the raindrops off that fall
In dark and muddy streets. The king's left hand
Holds up his costly robes. The other rests
On the shoulders of a youth of aspect stern.
He walks with a cheerful face, and over him
Is a white umbrella, decked with strings of pearl,
That shields him from the rain that noisily falls.

He walks about attended by a few
At dark midnight with no desire to rest.

The king does this when he is in the camp
At war with foemen numberless.

NOTES

1. *season.* Cold season : November and December.

6. *pasture grounds.* Unflooded higher grounds.

12. *Apply the heat.* A very vivid touch.

30-32. For appreciation see Introduction.

35. Note the change from the country to the city.

37. *sturdy men.* Bodyguards who are foreigners.

51. Rice and flowers. These are the ordinary offerings to the god.

52. There was no seclusion of women in those days.

56. *one leg now.* Note the vivid realistic touch.

59. *perfumes* are intended not so much for enjoyment, as disinfectants to prevent cold.

as for serving

60. *black as gram.* There is a kind of black gram.

61-62. These lines show that people at this season do enjoyments.

not care for

68. *artistic fans.* One sees such fans now in temples.

71. *upper storeys.* Cf. Seven-storeyed mansion in *M. Pattu* l. 113.

79. *dancing girls.* Dancing was a favourite pastime in those days.

82. *rubbing them, etc.* A very vivid touch.

87-88. In simple words, it is high noon.

89. *architects.* Those learned in *silpasastras*, probably Aryan.

90. *where the gods reside.* Before laying the foundation they find out the directions in which the gods reside in order to make them offerings.

96-97. *the name of a star.* The name of the star in Sanskrit is *uttaram*. This word in Tamil means beam.

97-99. *water-lilies — female elephants.* The carving of lotus flowers with elephants is found frequently in Hindu homes.

105. *sacred goddess.* A literal translation of another name of Lakshmi.

107. *yaks and short-legged swans.* The yak is a species of ox covered with a thick coat of silky hair, that of the lower parts almost hanging to the ground. Fans made of the tail of the animal are used in temples for fanning the idols.

118-132. A description of the purdah of the queen.

133-154. Rather a wearisome description of a bed. But it gives us an idea of a luxurious bed of those days.

134-137. *Tusks — battle-fields.* Note the details introduced for poetical effect.

155. Here the *agam* element begins and goes on to line 194.

157. *marriage tie alone.* The *thali.* See Introduction: Social life.

163. *bracelet — chank.* Common women wore chank bracelets.

right-whorled chank. A chank with right whorls is very considered very valuable.

rare, and so is

170-176. See Introduction for comments on the Poet's description of

female beauty.

187. *Ram.* According to the Aryan Zodiac *Meisam* or Ram is the

first constellation.

Rohini. Rohini is the mother of Balarama. The first lunar asterism is named after her.

192. *Mother.* Kotravi, the Dravidian war-goddess.

195. The *puram* element is resumed.

195-218. Note the solicitude of the king for his wounded war animals.

soldiers and

200-202. *torches' flames — to slant.* A very vivid touch.

204. *flowers of the neem.* This shows that the king was a Pandyan. Otherwise there is no way of finding out who he was, although the Commentator says it is Nedunjeliyan. For further notes on the symbolic flowers worn by kings see Introduction to *M. Pattu* : Social life.

211. *youth.* Young warrior.

KURINCHIPATTU

KURINCHIPATTU

INTRODUCTION

NAME

Kurinchipattu means mountain song. The *kurinchi* is a tree found in the hilly region and is considered to be typical of it. Another name of this poem is *Perumkurinchi* (the large *kurinchi*), as distinguished from the short poems of this description.

THE SUBJECT MATTER

Kurinchipattu is purely a love poem. There is very little of the *puram* element in it. The poem conforms to the principle laid down for the *agam* element of the *kurinchi* or hill region, viz., *punarthal*, or the union of the sexes. (See General Introduction to *Pattupattu: Agam* and *Puram*).

The following is the story. A mother sees

her daughter pine away day by day, and is distressed, not knowing the cause. She consults soothsayers, and makes offerings to the gods for her daughter's cure. A girl friend of the maiden who knows the cause keeps it secret, because she is afraid of the consequences, but seeing the misery of the mother, speaks out. This girl gives the mother the following account:

The two were sent into the fields to watch the crops and drive away the birds and animals that ruined them. While they were doing their work and enjoying themselves, they unexpectedly came across a handsome youth who was no other than the chieftain of that region. It was a case of love at first sight. To make matters easy an elephant came charging them, and the girls ran to the protection of the young man, who wounded the animal and drove it away. The young man was at first courteous, and did not dare to touch the maiden, who behaved with the utmost modesty. But they were swept off their feet by intense passion, and the man embraced the maiden. They enjoyed themselves in the beautiful groves of the forest. The lover pledged his honour that he would marry her in due course in proper form when their parents gave their consent to their

union. They were not without qualms about their illicit conduct. The lover visited the girl every night and wooed her in spite of the watch kept over her. On her part she was haunted by the fear of the dangers attending her lover who made nightly journeys through the forest infested with wild beasts.

SOCIAL LIFE

The poem is primarily a love story, and yet glimpses are not wanting of the life of the ancient Tamil people introduced incidentally.

The people of the hill region do not seem to have used much clothing, but covered themselves with garlands, flowers and leaves. However, clothes were not unknown, as may be seen from the comparison of the waters of the stream in which the girls bathed to white garments. Both men and women decked themselves with ornaments. The chieftain wore anklets on his legs.

As in other poems the love of ancient Tamils for flowers is shown by the many references to them in the poem.

Reference is made to the custom of women arranging their hair into five separate braids. It is interesting to note that, although this custom has now disappeared in the Tamil country, it is still prevalent in some parts of Burma.

We also note people using scents, sandal-paste and fragrant oils to make their persons agreeable.

The principal occupation in the hill region was naturally hunting, and the poem has a fine description of hunting dogs. We have also fine pictures of the cultivator guarding his crops from wild animals with his weapons, and girls being employed to drive away birds with slings, corn-cracks and drums.

The people indulged in "honey-sweet toddy" The peacocks too drank it, only they drank the self-made variety, mistaking it for water!

Dancing was a popular art, and there were who played on the stage, performing difficult feats, walking.

dancing girls
such as rope-

On festive occasions there was free feeding, as in these days, and delicacies were provided. At these feasts the host and hostess took delight in serving the guests, and ate what was left. This is an evidence of the virtue of hospitality being highly developed among ancient Tamils. The lover says to his love that one of the joys of married life is that they can eat together. (Is the more correct rendering "eat served" by the wife? For the husband and the wife eating together is not a Tamil custom. The idea of the wife eating after the whole household is served

is probably due to the woman of the house (*illal*) self as the hostess, and all others as guests).

regarding her. There is an interesting reference with water taken in the hand by the

to the custom of swearing one who makes the oath.

Although these people were primitive, they seem to have developed a high ethical sense. The remark of the maiden that character once ruined cannot be set right shows the high ethical standard of the time. Although *kalavu* or courtship was in vogue in those days, yet the lovers feel disturbed about their elation, and are anxious to get married in the proper way. The chieftain is courteous in his ways, and does not touch the maiden till he is taken unawares by intense passion. The girls regard modesty as "dearer than life", and their first impulse is to run away from the strange young man. It is only the fear of danger that makes them seek his protection.

As this is a love poem, it would be well to know something of love, courtship and marriage among ancient Tamils. In *Tholkappiam* the third chapter of the section, *Poruladigaram*, is *Kalavyal* or chapter on Love.

Love and Marriage

Among Aryans there were eight kinds of marriage grouped under three divisions: consent, violence and purchase. But among Tamils only marriage by consent prevailed.

Love is treated in that chapter under two heads: *kalavu* and *karpu*, which may be rendered as pre-nuptial love and post-nuptial love. *Kalavu* is literally theft or fraud. But in the technical sense it is a mode of marriage by secret courtship. This was not at all considered to be an irregular union of the sexes. The prevailing mode of marriage was the one that resulted from mutual love developed during the days of courtship. *Karpu* is regular marriage after courtship, which was celebrated with the consent of the parents.

In this poem the lovers are represented as being in the company of each other, and the lover makes nightly visits. This does not, however, mean that they had physical connection. Ancient Tamils had very strict ideas about it. Even after regular marriage an interval of some days had to pass for it. Perhaps this is intended not to put undue emphasis on sexual relation in marriage. Although there is nothing reprehensible about courtship, yet the lovers are not easy in their conscience, and desire to make this union perfect by a *karpu* marriage. The lover promises:

> We will in due form wed
> When thy relations give thy hand to me
> With public rites performed in proper form.

And the girl

feared wicked rumour in the town.

And thought their secret marriage ill-advised

. It should be noted that both the lovers desire the consent of the parents, and are not quite sure that it will be given.

The lovers fall in love at first sight. Such love is nowadays accounted for by certain physical and mental conditions. But ancient Tamils thought that it was due to connection in a previous birth. The maiden in the poem, being not sure of getting the consent of her parents, says:

Though not united now
We will united be in the world to come.

We may observe here that the present custom of arranging marriages of convenience or those for mercenary considerations is one of later growth among the
not allowed now, there are signs

Tamils. Although courtship is
of its revival among educated

people due to Western influence. But courtship
among the lower orders of society even now.

is prevalent

Religion

The presiding deity of the hill region was Muruga, the war-god, who fights Asuras with spear and drums. As noted before, this was a transition period when there was a mixture of Dravidian and Aryan gods. It is said that the people worshipped other gods also. Demons were dreaded by them. "Those wise men" and priests referred to in the poem were probably Aryan or Brahmin priests, and this shows that Aryan influence had begun to invade the Dravidian land. The statement of the love-lorn maiden that she would at least meet her lover "in the world to come" may point to the introduction of the Aryan idea of Transmigration. (See also Introduction to *Porunarattupadai*). We may note here the mythical idea of the cobra possessing a gem (*nagaratnam*) which, it is said, it disgorges at night for the purpose of feeding.

LITERARY MERITS

Kurinchipattu is one of the finest of the Ten Idylls. The highest kind of poetry is the outcome of an overflow of the poet's emotion which he communicates to the reader. Judged by this standard, this poem has high excellence. Love at first sight, the glow of passion in the hearts of the lovers, the insistency with which the lover woos the maiden, the fear of the maiden for the safety of her lover and the impediment on the way of true love: are all told in words that stir the heart.

The narration is wonderfully arresting and vivid. The following are some of the fine pen-pictures in which the poem abounds: the maidens watching the millet fields, scaring away birds and enjoying themselves bathing in "tarns that look like molten crystals of the hills"; the peacock staggering drunk with self-formed toddy and the hunting dogs accompanying the chieftain coming furiously at the frightened girls. The chieftain is drawn with a wealth of detail. The finest piece of realism in the poem is the description of the sunset which can hardly be excelled and equals that splendid word-painting of the cold season in *Nedunalvadai*. The sun sinking behind the hills, the deer taking refuge under trees, the kine calling their calves, the bent-billed nightingale calling out its mate, the cobra disgorging its gem, herdsmen playing their rural tunes, priests performing their evening devotions, bright-bangled ladies engaged in their evening tasks, jungle men living on lofts lighting their fires, jungle beasts calling to their mates and the carolling of birds: all these bring before our mental eyes the picture of the sunset with great vividness.

Pen-Pictures

There are a number of passages where the poet shows his appreciation of Nature's beauties. The splendid description of the sunset just referred to is an excellent illustration of this. The picture of the clouds that move majestically across the sky with a rolling thunderous noise drinking the ocean's waters and pouring down showers that are formed into streams, is another piece of nature painting. The dangers attending the nightly journey of the lover through the jungle is a further example of the poet's intimate acquaintance with Nature. His fondness for flowers is seen in the catalogue of 99 flowers of the hill region. We may say, however, that this list seems an intrusion, and somewhat detracts from the high poetic level of the poem.

Nature

Similes

This poem has the distinction of having a few highly elaborate similes. There are two double similes : similes within similes. The maiden who is taken aback when her lover embraces her without warning and trembles with confusion and passion is compared to the peacock that staggers having drunk toddy. And then the poet goes on to compare the peacock to a dancing girl staggering tired after a tight-rope dance. The other double simile is found where the chieftain who is said to drive away his hunting dogs with a twig is compared to an elephant driving away "amative bees" with branches broken from trees. These bees, again, are said to make a hum like the music produced by expert musicians playing

on their lutes sweet day-tunes. In a third
content with bringing out the point that
simile the poet, not
the clouds that fall

as rain are as bright as the glint of Muruga's
elaborate the god's achievements.

spear, goes on to

Apart from these elaborate similes, we have a number of simpler ones: the eyes of the watchman's wife are deer-like; streams are like shining white garments; tarns look like molten crystal; the anger of hunting dogs is like the fury of fierce warriors, and their teeth are like bamboo shoots; the elephant's trumpeting is like the thunderclap heard in rainy months; the girls stand trembling like the plantain tree on the edge of a foaming river; the grounds of the chieftain's domain are like the playing stage covered with carpets; the love-lorn maiden is like a trapped peacock; and (this is the best of all) the hair of the maidens falling on their backs is "like sapphire set on gold."

There are no hyperboles properly speaking. The "sky-high lofts" and the clouds reducing the waters of the ocean, are only exaggerated language found in oriental speech.

PRINCIPLES OF TAMIL POETRY

The poem was composed, it is said, to teach an Aryan king Prahattan, the principles of Tamil poetry. In the paragraphs relating to marriage and love we have noticed how the poet conforms to the ideas of marriage and love mentioned by the great Grammarian. We may add the following enumeration of the elements of a love poem as laid down by him. There are seven elements of which six are found in this poem: speaking in contempt (எளித்தல்); praise (ஏத்தல்); expression of desire (வேட்கை உரைத்தல்); explaining reasons (ஏதீடு); shifting responsibility (தலைப்பாடு) and speaking the truth (உண்மை செப்பல்). That the poem contains these elements is pointed out in the Notes.

The signs of love in a girl are thus described in the eighth stanza of *Kalaviyal* in *Tholkappiam*, and may be rendered thus: love concentrated upon the chosen lover; pining; being emaciated; desire for the fruition of love: losing coyness: thinking only of the lover; forgetting of duties; fainting and unconsciousness. Most of these conditions are present in the heroine of this poem.

One more point that conforms to the rule laid down by the Grammarian is called *aratthodunittal* (அறத்தொடு நிற்றல்) which means doing one's duty. Here the lady's maid does her duty in revealing the secret of her companion to the mother to save her from distress.

INTRODUCTION

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THE AUTHOR

The author is Kapilar, a Brahmin by caste, and a native of Tiruvadavur in the Pandyan kingdom. The legend that he was the brother of Tiruvalluvar and Auvvaiyar is not now believed. He was highly popular with the poets of the time. Nakkirar, the author of *Nedunalavadai*, said of him: "Eloquent and famous Kapilar whose verses are full of deep meaning." He was, it is said, a member of the Tamil Sangham and was one of those that eulogised Tiruvalluvar's *Kural* when it was brought before the Sangham. The Aryan king, for whose benefit this poem was written, is said to have become a lover of Tamil

poetry and himself produced a poem which is included in the anthology known as *Kurunthogai.* He was a favourite poet of the Pandyan king, and at first lived in Madura. Later, he migrated to the capitals of smaller kings, notable among whom was Pari. He was so attached to this king that he helped him, and, when he was defeated and killed, took charge of his daughters for whom he found husbands. He also lived in the court of the Chera king, Athan, the son-in-law of that great monarch, Karikala Cholan.

Kapilar is the author of many high-class poetical works besides this poem. He wrote a number of poems contained in the anthologies: *Ahananuru, Purananuru, Kurunthogai, Natrinai, Pathittupattu, Pathinenkilkanakku,* if we believe that they were all written by one and the same Kapilar. He seems to have been a great flatterer of kings, and composed eulogistic verses about them. He was *par excellence* the poet of the hill region. Judged by modern standards, he was veritably a king among Tamil poets.

DATE OF COMPOSITION

As in the case of the other poems, all we can say with con- fidence is that this Idyll was composed in the Sangham period. (See also the General Introduction and Introductions to the other Idylls for further information on this subject).

LANGUAGE

There are 261 lines in the poem, containing 1,440 words of which 22 are not Tamil words.

Nineteen are of Sanskrit origin, four are common to Tamil and Sanskrit, and three are provincial words

.

VERSIFICATION

Like *Mullaipattu* this poem is written in *asiriappa* metre peculiar to *agaval* verse. (For further notes on this metre see General Introduction to *Pattupattu* and Introduction to *Mullaipattu*).

KURINCHIPATTU

Hail, mother! Be thou pleased to hear my words.
My maiden friend who has a bright forehead,
Whose hair is soft and rich, and whose fair skin
Is matchless, now is stricken with disease
Incurable, that makes her jewels slip
From her. Soothsayers thou didst then consult
That understand these things in this large town.
Thou hast adored the gods of various forms,
And worshipped them by strewing blossoms fair,
And offerings of perfumes and incense made.
Thou didst with pain grieve knowing not the cause,
And see her beauty fade, her shoulders fair
Grow thin. All people see her bracelets slip.
She suffers from her loneliness. Her grief
Deep-seated makes her life quite hard to bear.
I kept this close not knowing what to say.
When pressed to state the cause she says:
" Those jewels made of pearls and gems and gold
May ruined be, but yet can be set right. '
But if once noble worth and virtue fail,
E'en holy men endowed with wisdom great
Could not restore them to their pristine state.
This truth is known to those in old lore versed.
My parents' love for me was in accord
Quite with my modesty. Yet I ignored
The safeguard of my father wise who rides
In a chariot tall. If we announce the fact

To them that we ourselves arranged this match
Should we be blamed? Though not united now,
We will united be in the world to come."

My cheerless, grieving friend who pined away
And lost her deer-like look and zeal thus spoke.

Like those wise men who try to reconcile
Two great contending kings I was oppressed
With two great fears. We bravely took this step 148

KURINCHIPATTU

For our own good, and took advice from none.
Regardless of the benefits that flow
From wedlock, harmony amongst our kin,
Propriety, and help our kindred give.

As thou didst us permit to go and ask
That we return before the end of day,
We went and drove away the parrots gay
That feed on millet plants whose soft, large ears
Just coming out fresh from their sheathes droop down,
Resembling trunks which elephants support
On pearl-filled tusks when tired of vain attempts
To raise their heads to reach the rich rice-sheaves
That on a lofty bamboo pole are hung.
We climbed a loft that is the tiger's dread
Erected by the hunter on the top
Of noisy trees. We parrots scared away.
And made sky-roaming birds fly to their nests
With corn-cracks made of hill-side canes, with skill,
And slings, and drums and other instruments.
Employed in turn. When the sun diffused its rays
And caused great heat, the clouds that are on high
That in procession move with a rolling noise
Of thunder sweet like the soft drum's beat, and drink
The lessened waters of the ocean dark.

And swelling shine like Muruga's leaf-shaped spear
Against Asuras used in fights with drums
That sweetly sound and weapons bright—these clouds
Are stirred by winds that sweep the dark, wide sky.
They then pour down their showers upon the hills,
And sparkling streams are formed with waters clear
That leap from hills belonging to the chief.
These waters look like shining garments white.
We sported ceaseless in these streams with zest
And plunged ourselves within extensive tarns
That look like molten crystals of the hills.
We played and chanted songs to our heart's content.
We rinsed the water from our braided locks
And let them dry as they upon our backs
Shone bright like sapphire that is set on gold,
Our eyes all red* . . . .

. . . .

*(Here follows a list of 99 kinds of flowers,
see Appendix).
for the Tamil names of which

These blooms with pleasure culled in various fields
We piled upon high rain-washed rocks. On slopes
Of neighbouring hills that are alive with birds
Whose notes are sweet, we shouted out loud words
At intervals to frighten parrots off.
We girdles wove of flowers culled there, and graced

Our soft dark crowns with many-hued fair snoods. We
laid ourselves beneath *asoka* trees
Below whose cooling shades fall filaments,
Whose shoots are pretty-hued like flaming fire.

A youth appeared whose well-oiled curly hair
That shone like gem was smeared with unguents sweet.
He with his fingers stirred his plaited hair
To make it dry. His locks were scented well
With hard, dark *akhil* smoke; his hair was filled
With odours that delight the strip-ed bees
Whose hum, is like the music of the lute.
The youth's imposing, noble head was decked
With cool and fragrant wreaths of blossoms made Of
many colours culled from hill and vale,
From trees, from hilly tanks, and from screw-pines.
He wore around his body pretty wreaths
Of lovely flowers of soft-stalked *pitchi* made,
And stuck upon his ear the pretty buds
Of the *asoka* tree with blooms as red as fire.
These waving fall upon his shoulders broad.
His strong high breast well-rubbed with sandal-paste
And smeared red bears, besides his wonted gauds,

Sweet-smelling garlands that conspicuous hang.
His stout hands hold a painted well-strung bow
And arrows chosen well. He wears a belt,
A work of art, securely round his waist.
And when he moved, his golden anklets bright
Upon his faultless legs made a tinkling sound.

Like youthful heroes armed with many spears
That make their foemen turn their backs and run
And havoc play in battle, strong and fierce,
His big-clawed hounds, whose teeth shine bright
Like bamboo shoots, were filled with anger wild
Whenever people came across their paths.
As they encircling us with staring eyes
Advanced, we trembled, and our feet did sway,
With great confusion and distress of mind.

And so we tried to flee to another place..
He looked imposing like a victorious bull.
That drives away its rivals when it sees

A strange cow. That he might not frighten us
He quietly spoke sweet, gentle words of cheer.
He spoke to us of women doing up
Their tresses in five separate braided knots.
He praised the way our hair was plaited well,
And said, " O maids endowed with beauty soft,
With cool, chaste eyes and navel finely curved,
O tender ones, I just have lost my game."
As we made no response, he said distressed,
" If ye care not to help me in my search,
Can ye not speak at least a word to me ? "
As a ruttish tusker wild unchecked by goad
Breaks branches down, he tore a flow'ring twig,
In which amative bees that wish to mate
Make hum resembling much the music made
By experts playing sweet day-tunes on lutes,
And silences the harsh bark of his hounds.
He waited then for our reply.

When the tiller is with honied toddy drunk
Served by his wife who has soft, deer-like eyes
In a thatch-ed cottage that's by short posts propped!
And quite neglects the guarding of his crops,
The fields are eaten up by elephants.
Unable this to bear and much distressed,
He strings his bow that looks as shapely as
The cobra's spread-out hood. With anger filled
That shakes his frame, he drives away the beasts
By shooting arrows, striking scaring rods,
By whistling, lips pursed up, and shouting loud!
So that the noise is heard throughout the woods.
Such a beast in ruttish state that shivered trees
And made a roaring noise like thunder-clap
Heard in the rainy months came towards us.
Its coarse trunk, dark, huge and proportioned well
Thrown on the ground. Excited as we were,
We knew not how to save our lives and ran,
Forgetting modest ways that dearer are
Than life itself, to his protection sure,
Our well-made bangles making a tinkling sound:
Like peacocks quite possessed we shook. He shot
His long notched arrows at the shapely face

And hurt the beast's striped, spotted forehead fair.
Then from the wounds blood flowed free on its face.
The beast retreated dazed. We linked our hands

Together quite secure as dancers do
In lists when under Muruga's spell ; or looked
Like garlands twining round the *kadamba*
Whose trunk is thick and strong. We trembling stood
Like plantain trees that stand on river's edge
That foaming runs with currents swift and strong.
The great chief seeing this addressed us thus :
" O pretty maid with tresses fair, move not
From where now thou dost stand. I much desire To
feed upon thy beauty. Fear thou not
That I will ever give thee up." He stroked
His bright and faultless face. He looked at me

And smiled as though he said this love would last. He
stood still there not daring her to touch.
She prompted by her modesty and fear
Attempted flight, but he prevented this,
And where he stood he clasped her to his breast.
She then looked like the peacock that is drunk
With toddy free from bees, mistaking it
For water, that distils from fruits that fall
From thick stemmed mango trees and from jak fruits
That taste as sweet as honey, and collects
On rocks where pepper ripe lies scattered wide,
And staggers on the hill like a dancing girl
Who feels much tired performing a tight-rope dance
To music rendered by a tuneful band
On a festive stage built in a hamlet large
Well-known for celebrating festivals.
He is the noble lord of mountains high

On whose sky-reaching tops the *kanthal* shrub
Sheds cool and fragrant blooms which lie below
Bestrewn, on which the mountain nymphs disport.
These grounds resemble much a playing stage
O'erspread with multi-coloured carpets fine.

The chief divined the maiden's inmost thoughts,
And won her love. To make her understand
The bliss of wedded life the chieftain said:
" As in a wealthy house they open wide
The doors that many might there feed on rice
Well-cooked in vessels large and served to all,

Then thou wilt entertain and serve the rice
Prepared with ghee and sacred blood of rams
Pure high born chiefs will feast with all their kin,
And I too will consider it a boon
To eat with thee the food that may be left.
He praised and worshipped Muruga, the god that lives
On mountains high, and with an oath assured
The puzzled maid his pledge was truly made.
And when he took and drank sweet water clear
As token of his pledge, she felt assured.

They all day long enjoyed themselves in full
Like mating elephants, in flow'ry groves
Adjoining caves in which great gods themselves
Who have abodes on high delight to live.

The wide-rayed sun that drives its seven-horsed car
Sank down and disappeared behind the hills.
The deer took refuge under trees in crowds,
And herds of cows that into commons crowd
Called out their calves. The bent-billed nightingale
Whose voice is trumpet-like called to its mate
From broad-leaved palmyras. The snake its gem
Disgorged. The *ambal* tune that herdsmen play
On sweet clear lutes is sounded here and there.
The *ambal* opened out its petals bright;
The priests performed religious rites at eve;
In wealthy homes bright-bangled women lit
Their lamps and well performed their evening tasks;
The jungle men that live upon high lofts
Lit fires. The clouds around the hills grew dark.
Each jungle beast called sharply to its mate;
And birds their ditties carolled loud.

To soothe her grief he spoke these gracious words:
"O maid that wears bright jewels, hear! We'll wed
When thy relations give thy hand to me.
With public rites performed in proper form.
Give up thy grief now for a little while."

Like a bull that doth pursue a cow, he came
Close after us, and left us at the gates
Of the ancient town where drums cease not to sound,
And where the people go to quench their thirst.
And ever since with the passion that he felt

At first, he always called on her at nights.
If watchmen were about when he arrived,
Or angry dogs barked loud, or thou didst watch,
Or the moon shone bright, he then would lose his sleep
Upon her bamboo-like smooth shoulders fair.
When disappointed he would not be vexed.
He has not passed his prime, nor has he lost
His virtues innate to his high estate.

As she fears wicked rumours in the town,
And thinks their secret meeting ill-advised,
Her rich cool eyes are moist with tears, and lose
Their loveliness. When she doth think of him,
Her eye-lids droop. Then like a peacock trapped
She feels distressed, and loses her good looks.
Her breast is wet with tears that daily fall
From fear that the chief's great mountain caves conceal
At night the tiger that in coverts live,
The *yali* and the bear, the antelope
Whose horns are yellow and the elephant,
And the strong and deadly lion with raging eyes
And anger great. She thinks of cruel gods,
The snake that goes about in search of prey,
The black and bent-legged crocodile that lies
In wait in whirlpool's dreaded waters deep,
The alligator, the tangled vine, the ground
That's slippery and the path that ends in tracks,
Grim demons, pythons, panthers and all ills
That no one can escape.

NOTES

1. *mother*. Foster mother (Nach.). Why not the heroine's own.

mother?

2. *maiden friend.* It may be the foster sister.

6. *Soothsayers.* This is a custom that obtains even day.

at the present.

8. *adored the gods.* This is done on the advice of soothsayers.

gods of various forms. May it be God in various forms?

18-22. Note the high ethical standard of primitive times.

21. *holy men.* Probably *rishis.*

24-25. Note the ideals of both *karpu* and *kalavu.* See Love and Marriage.

Introduction ::

28. *we arranged.* Such marriages were allowed.

30. Rebirth idea. See Introduction to *P. A. Padai :* Religion.

35. *two great fears.* The fear of the consequences of the revelation of the secret, and the failing health of her companion.

45-48. A vivid simile. See Introduction.

53. *made of canes.* Nach. takes it with loft. But corn cracks is more natural.

to take it with

60-70. For the simile see Introduction.

Muruga. The mountain god.

61. *Asuras.* They correspond to the Titans in who warred on gods.

Greek mythology

66. Note the subtle way in which she praises the chief.

67. *shining garments.* The hill tribes wore their dress

made of leaves

and flowers, but they seem to have used manufactured

garments also.

74. A striking simile.

75. Here 99 names of flowers are mentioned in the text. They are omitted in the translation, as they would convey very little idea to reader, besides having no poetic value. For the names of the flowers see Appendix.

81. *girdles of flowers.* The usual leaf dress.

86. *a youth.* Not in the Tamil text, but introduced to clear. The Poet brings in a youth abruptly.

make the sense.

86-109. Quite a dandy! Note his love of flowers.

108. *golden anklet.* Men also wore jewels.

110-112. Note the elaborate simile. See Introduction.

122-123. Note the chief's courtesy.

125. *five — knots.* This division of the hair into five braids is not practised in the Tamil country now. Something like it is seen in Burma.

128. *Navel.* The maiden was almost naked. cf. The songstress in *P. A. Padai* l. 48.

129.

132.

The usual pretext for entering into a conversation.

Note the modesty of the girls.

136-137. A simile within a simile.

137. *day-tunes.* The Tamils have various tunes divisions of day and night.

for the different

140-151.

158-159.

All this splendid description is just to introduce an elephant!
Note again the value set on modesty.

161. *peacocks — possessed.* The peacock is the Muruga.

favourite bird of

170. *river's edge.*

Nach. is clearly wrong in saying that the girls jumped into the river, etc. That is to say that they were in the river and in dry land at the same time! The river is brought in here to show the precarious state of the plantain tree that stands on the river's edge, to which the excited girls are compared.

179. *not daring her to touch.* Note, again, the courtesy

180-181. Once more the modesty of the girls.

of the man..

182. *he clasped,* etc. His passion overcame his courtesy.

183. *like.* This is supplied by the translator to make the sense clear. The comparison is obvious. The maiden would naturally tremble with fear and passion at the sudden embrace of the man.

183-193. The narrator is indirectly recommending the probable foster (?) mother-in-law by describing his domain.

chieftain to the

189. *like a dancing girl.* A simile within a simile. See Introduction: Similes. Dancing was performed at festivals.

194-199. Again the subtle recommendation.

203-210. A glimpse of the hospitality of ancient Tamils.

207. The best food was given to guests.

210. *To eat with thee.* This is the literal
'to eat when served by thee'? Wives do not

translation. May it mean Hindu
generally eat with men in guest.

homes. The idea is that they regard every one in the home as a
But eating together might have been the custom in those days.

215. *token of his pledge.*
means that the swearer would
life, if forsworn.
Drinking water when taking an oath perhaps
be willing to be deprived of that essential to

220-236. A splendid description of sunset. The
poem. See Introduction.
finest passage in the

224. *nightingale.* In the Tamil text அன்றில்.

226. *the snake,* etc. There is no truth in the existence of the cobra gem.

227. *ambal tune.* One of the herdsmen's tunes.

230. *priests.* Probably Aryan priests.

237-241. See Introduction : Love and Marriage.

249. *thou.* The foster (?) mother.

255-256. Note the sense of decency and modesty of the maiden.

259. *peacock.* Note the frequent mention of the peacock which is pre-eminently the bird of the *kurinchi* region.

269-271. *crocodiles* ; *alligators.*
text.
Different words are used in the Tamil

MADURAIKANCHI

MADURAIKANCHI

INTRODUCTION

NAME

Maduraikanchi means a poem addressed to the king of Madura. It has partly the didactic object of giving Nedunjelyan, the king of Madura, advice about the way in which he should rule his kingdom. The king was a great conqueror, and the poet was anxious that he should not be carried away by his worldly success, and that he should rule his subjects with wisdom and justice. He, however, does not do this openly, but, as we shall see in the poem, inserts tactfully such advice in an indirect manner. But the greater part of the poem deals with the character and achievements of the king, and contains a description of the Pandyan kingdom, especially the city of Madura.

The poem is sometimes called *Peruvalamaduraikanchi* (the great etc.) signifying its excellence. It is the longest of the Ten Idylls, containing 800 lines.

SUBJECT MATTER

The poet begins by speaking of the prosperity of the Pandyan kingdom for which Nedunjelyan's ancestors were responsible. This is an indirect hint to the king that he should emulate their example. At the same time the poet very tactfully lauds the king's character and valour, and enumerates the great victories he has gained: his brilliant victory at Thalaialanganam over the Chera and Chola kings; his conquest of the great seaport, Saliyur (or is it Nellore?) and his subjugation of the war-like Paravars. He speaks of the king's generosity to his friends and his hatred to foes. He sings of the virtues of his patron, and at the same time impresses upon him the transitoriness of life, his duty to rule his subjects wisely and justly and the need for living a higher life. All this he inserts here and there in an indirect manner. He describes at length the wealth, the vegetation and the people of the five regions in his kingdom: the fertile *marutham* fields, the hilly *kurinchi* tract, the parched *palai* desert and the *neithal* sea-coast noted for its sea-borne trade. In

passing, we may note that the Pandyan kingdom was peculiar in this, that it had within its limits all the five kinds of regions, while the Chera kingdom was mostly *kurinchi* or hilly region, and the Chola kingdom was *marutham* tract consisting of fields.

The heart of the poem is, however, the description of the city of Madura: its fortified gates; its sky-high mansions; its broad streets; the crowds in the market places and the gay life of the citizens. The poet describes the life of the city under five heads: morning, evening, nightfall, the second part of the night and early dawn just before sunrise. (For detailed summary see below: Madura). The king passes the night well, and awaking thinks of his kingly duties. At the end of the poem the poet once more holds up the king's predecessors as worthy examples, extolling at the same time the king's great qualities, and winds up by wishing his patron prosperity and long life.

NEDUNJELYAN

Nedunjelyan II was the greatest Pandyan king of his age. His father, also a great warrior, known too as Nedunjelyan, was given the designation, *Aryapadai*, because he repelled an Aryan invasion. Nedunjelyan II came to the throne when very young, and the Chera and Chola kings, taking advantage of his youth, invaded his territories. The young king who was not only a patron of poets, but was himself a poet, composed an ode in which he declared that he would be unworthy to rule, if he could not vanquish his foes (*Purananuru*). He gained over these great kings at Thalaialanganam.

a brilliant victory
The victory so

captured the imagination of the poets
of odes were composed to celebrate

of those days that a number
it. Ten odes are found in

Purananuru, and nine in
number of minor poems.

Agananuru. Besides these, there are a
Afterwards he defeated five chieftains

who came to the rescue of these kings. The
description is given of his victory in the poem :

following brief

Thou didst fly like the wind, spread fire around,
Destroy the country of thy foes, encamp
At Alanganam scaring them, cut down
Their chiefs and seize their drums. Triumphant thus,
Thou didst perform the rites of victory great.

Beside this he captured the great seaport, Saliyur, which is in the poem called "the seaport named after paddy." Some critics think that the seaport is Nellore which is in the extreme

north of the kingdom. It may be noted that both Saliyur and Nellore mean the country of paddy. He also conquered Kudanadu, the town of Muduvellalai, and Alembil. The chieftain

celebrated in *Nedunalvadai* is probably Nedunjelyan, although his name is not mentioned in that poem. There we find a graphic description of his solicitude for his soldiers.

In this poem the poet gives a glowing account of the king's valour, and generosity. The following tribute is paid:

Though thou couldst paradise
Attain and eat ambrosia, being false,
Thou wouldst prefer to be sincere. E'en if
High gods and men of this wide earth, round which
Lie roaring seas, become thy foes, thou wouldst
Refuse to fear and cringe. E'en if the wealth
That Vanan stored in the mountains in the South
Are given thee, thou wouldst not stoop to do
A wicked deed.

Moreover, he is said to have ruled his subjects according to laws, and taught them "virtue's ways." The poem composed by him (see above) also shows his ideals of kingship.

Some writers believe that the king ascended the throne a few years before the death of that great king, Karikala Cholan, who was his friend. His reign is commonly believed to have lasted from A.D. 90 to 128.

MADURA

This poem gives us a detailed description of the city of Madura, the Pandyan capital, just as *Pattinapalai* describes Kaveripattinam, the Chola capital. The account given of the city in *Nedunalvadai* probably refers to Madura. This city, having a great deal to do with the story of Kovilan and Kannakai, is described in *Silapathikaram* also.

There is a legend about the origin of Madura. It is said that it was named after the sacred city of Muttra on the banks of the Jumna, which was one of the capitals of the Pandavas of Mahabharata fame. Some of the descendants of the Pandavas are said to have founded this city. Accordingly, it is sometimes called Thakkana Madura (Southern Madura). Another story is that there were three Tamil Sanghams, of which the first one was situated in a Madura which was destroyed by the sea, the second one, in Kabadapuram, and this city was the third place in which the Sangham flourished.

It seems that in ancient times Madura had a flourishing trade with Rome, and Roman soldiers are said to have guarded the gates of the city. The finding of Roman coins near it is an evidence of this fact.

This city was the capital of the Pandyan kings, and was the centre of the growth of Tamil literature, being situated in the heart of the Tamil land. The capital of the Pandyans was at first Korkai, a famous sea-port noted for its trade in pearls, but was later transferred to this city. The present city is situated six miles north-west of the old city, and Tiruparankunram lies south-west of the present city. (See Introduction to *T. M. Padai*).

The following is a brief summary of the description of Madura in this poem. The city walls are high, and the gateways are lofty and strong. The streets are as "broad as rivers." The crowds that throng the morning market place are varied in creed, race and speech. The city is and places of worship. Flags

much beflagged to denote shops were given also as decorations for valorous deeds. The forces of the king march through the streets: soldiers, elephants, and chariots drawn by prancing horses. Petty traders sell their various wares such as cakes flowers, perfumes and betel and arecanuts. Old dames carry about attractive gauds and flowers, and sell them to young and beautiful women. The import and export trade of the city is inexhaustible. It is evening, and rich noblemen drive about the streets in chariots drawn by spirited horses. Fair dames deck themselves with jewels and flowers, and stand on high terraces gazing on the scenes below. People throng the temples where music is played. And women, escorted by their husbands and children, carry votive offerings to the gods. The poet here pauses to speak of eminent people dwelling in the city such as judges, ministers of state, and counsellors. The poet resumes his account of the market scenes. The restaurants where delicacies are provided are well patronised. The evening market place is just as crowded as the morning. The moon is up, and maidens light their lamps and take to various enjoyments, adorning themselves and applying perfumes to their bodies. They play on the sweet-stringed *yal* and make merry with young men. Then follow a long description of the harlots of the city who lure away unsuspecting young men with their wiles, fleece them and abandon them afterwards. Quarrelsome *Maravars* reel about the streets drunk with toddy. Young wives go to temples to pray to the gods for motherhood, singing and carrying lights and food-offerings which they share with the priestesses. Others indulge in rustic dances in honour of Muruga, to whom they attribute all ills that come to them. It is midnight, and the city is wrapped in sweet slumber. The shops are shut, and goblins and vampires are abroad. And so are the burglars whom the night watchmen cleverly check. Then it is early dawn. The Brahmins chant their Vedas, and

bards tune their instruments. Mahouts feed their elephants, and horses in their stalls are restless. Traders smear the floors of their shops with cow dung, and toddy-sellers open their shops for early customers. People in general open the doors which make a screeching noise. Women go about their household duties. Drunkards shout, while flatterers go about their business. Watchers announce the hour, and loud drums are heard. Beasts in the zoo roar, the cock proclaims the dawn, and swans and cranes invite their mates. Fair women sweep the floors bestrewn with the remnants of the night's festivities. It is now dawn. The forces of the king that went on foraying expeditions return bringing in their spoils.

> This is the Madura town far-famed and rich
> And splendid like the abode of gods.

SOCIAL LIFE

From the preceding account of the city we learn a great deal about the life of the times. The Pandyan kingdom in general, and its capital in particular, had an efficient system of government in the first centuries of the Christian era. The king was not an absolute autocrat. He had around him judges, ministers of state, counsellors, and officials to advise and help him in the administration. Of the judges it is said:

> They do their work
> Avoiding passion and all levity.
> With fair, impartial minds they ponder
> As though they weighed them in a pair

things
of scales.

The counsellors checked the way of the king and gave him advice. They were called *kavithis* (cf. *kathi*, a Mohamedan judge). We may infer that hermits too had considerable influence over the king, as these counsellors are compared to the hermits that speak to the kings boldly. There was a council consisting of four kinds of officers, probably corresponding to four administrative branches. The village elders met together in *manrams*, which were at first under trees, and later in purpose to transact public business.

buildings erected for the
Guards were placed in
crossways to protect traders and to levy toll. (Cf. *P. P. Padai*, tr.l. 95). The king had an army consisting of warriors, elephants and horses.

The city carried on extensive trade, even with such distant places like Rome. Traders crossed the high seas, and such things as horses were imported; and pearls, gems, conchshell bangles, salt, dried fish and tamarind were exported. The merchant princes of the city are said to follow "virtue's rules."

Being a great emporium, the city was cosmopolitan, and men of different races, creeds and tongues were found in the city.

The king's counsellors wore turbans. The practice of starching cloth was known; the garment of the king was starched. Unlike dwellers of rural places those of the city wore fine garments. Women put on fine ornaments of gold and gems: anklets filled with gems, bangles with flower designs and costly pendants. Men too put on ornaments, and the jewels of the king are described, one of which was a bracelet. Women used perfumes, sandalwood and musk, and infused their hair with the smoke of *akhil*. Women did not live in seclusion. They enjoyed life, and we are told that young men sported with women and danced with them. The city was not without that evil of "civilization": harlots. In Tamil poems the chastity of women is exalted. But men were allowed to have women around them, and the king is represented as being surrounded by very beautiful women. We note that there was an art of thieving, as we are told that the cleverness of the watchmen is admired by "those who know the burglars' art", and the night-watchmen who caught them are said to have been versed in law.

People ate rice boiled with flesh and curries well-flavoured with spices. They ate sweetmeats and various cakes, one of which is said to resemble a honeycomb, and a pastry made of coconuts and sugar. (These latter two are even now used in the Tamil country and are called respectively தோட்டச்சு and கொழுக்கட்டை). The jak and the mango were the favourite fruits of the time. Toddy was drunk by all classes of people. Betel and arecanut was eaten with a specially prepared paste as now.

Rural people lived in thatched huts, and used the deerskin for their beds, while the city dwellers lived in well-built mansions. Various kinds of baskets used in irrigation are mentioned. *Panars* were considered outcastes, and had abodes outside the city limits.

Music, dancing and singing were popular. The *yal* was the favourite instrument on which the seven notes were played. There was a particular kind of *yal* used for a special purpose. Ancient Tamils developed music to great perfection, and had different tunes for different occasions and times of the day. Of these two are mentioned in the poem: the *sevvali* tune played in the evening, and the *marutham* tune, in the morning.

RELIGION

From the accounts given in the poem about the religious life of the people, we may conclude that the Dravidian forms of worship existed side by side with Aryan cults that were spreading

fast in the Tamil land. It must be remembered that the Aryanisation of the country was peaceful at first, and the kings were tolerant of the various cults. We note that Muruga worship still continued, and people, believing that all ills were caused by that god, worshipped him and performed dances in his honour. There is also a reference to that " pleasant " hill, Tiruparankunram, which is one of the shrines of Muruga. But when the poet describes the evening worship in the city (tr. ll. 497-505) where rice offerings were made to the god " who wields the battle-axe " and who is the " creator of the five elements", the reference is evidently to Siva. Again, when we are told (tr. ll. 506-511) that women attended by their families went to the temples of him " who protects the world," Vishnu is meant. The *marava* soldiers celebrated the birth of Vishnu. The city gates had the figures of Lakshmi carved on their doors. We are told that at

the festival held on the seventh day after the full moon people bathed in order to cleanse their sins. This probably was an Aryan belief. That the Vedic cult was practised is clearly told in the account of the Brahmin ascetics who (tr. ll. 512-518) "chant the Vedas and carry out the proper rites prescribed." The poet advises the king to realise the unity of the soul with the Universe. The *rishis* are said to "reach high heaven while they are here on earth"; in other words, they become *jivanmuktas*. Besides these Hindu cults, we find Jain and Buddhist religions also flourishing in the city. Their monks resided in groves, taught their disciples, and knew the future as well as the present (tr. ll. 519-525). The people were not without their superstitions. They believed in ghouls eating the corpses of people killed in the battle-field, and in demons and vampires ranging through the city streets at midnight. They consulted soothsayers.

What strikes us most in the religious life of the people of those times is the spirit of toleration that prevailed as regards religious matters.

LITERARY MERITS

Nature

Like all early poets the author of this poem observed and appreciated Nature. We may notice one peculiarity in him. He has a partiality for the sea and the sky. Most of his descriptions are about the sky, the sun, the clouds and the rains. He has watched the clouds drinking water from the sea and pouring it on the parched earth; the beauty of the waxing and waning of the moon; the moon amidst the stars; the sun rising from the waves of the sea and the

winds lashing the sea-waves. Here is a description of the evening:

The bright-rayed sun abates its angry heat
And nears the western hills at evening time.
The full moon grown mature doth rise in the east
Diffusing glorious light that matches day,
And brings in night.

A number of his similes are taken from these phenomena (See below: Similes).

He is also interested in flowers, trees, and plants. He has watched the ways of the elephant, the deer, the horse and other animals, and birds like the peacock and the swan. The following pen-pictures will illustrate these traits.

Realistic Pictures

One of the most striking, and, at the same time, very revolting, pictures in the poem is the account of the ghouls devouring the corpses of those fallen in the battle-field. (Cf. a similar picture in the *T. M. Padai* ll. 73-87). Another striking picture is that of the furious elephant of the king breaking its pegs, killing its keeper, and running amok like a ship that the storm drives from its moorings. (See below: Similes). The descriptions of the five regions of the king's dominions are a series of pictures. In them the fauna and the flora, the sights and sounds and the ways of the people are brought before our eyes vividly. The picture of the *marutham* land (tr. ll. 239-278) is especially very striking. Equally picturesque is the description of the land of Mudiaveli (tr. ll. 96-98). But the very heart of the poem is the description of the city of Madura: its mansions, its streets, its morning and evening bazaars, its worshippers etc. We may pick out for special mention the arresting description of the harlots of the city (tr. ll. 601-649); the burglars and night watchmen; and above all the activities of the people in the early hours of the morning just before the dawn (tr. ll. 723-760). As to the graphic description of women (tr. ll. 449-458) we may note that these early poets made a speciality of delineating the beauty of women.

Similes

Although the author of this poem excels, like all early poets, in the use of similes, he does not indulge in them as much as some others, such as the author of *Malaipadukadam*. One of these has been noticed under Realistic Pictures above. The furious elephant that runs amok is compared to a storm at sea wrecking a ship

Which furious winds do lash, break the cordage strong
With which the sails are bound fast, tears the sails,
Break down the mast, make the anchor roll about,
Drive the vessel into whirlpool strong, and make
It spin . . .

In another simile the noise in the morning bazaar
the bustle in a seaport town. But the poet, not
is likened to
content with
drawing the comparison, goes on to develop the
idea of a sea-
port, and tells us how trading vessels come into port:

(They) at flood time do come
From the deep ill-smelling sea into the
shallows dark
At midnight.

The poet goes on to give us still another simile for the same thing:

The noise may be compared
To clamour made of various birds at eve
Returning to their nests.

We have already noticed that the poet is
fond of the sea
and the sky, and draws most of his similes from these. Besides the simile of the elephant and the storm, we note the following; banners are tossed about like sea waves; the slumber of the city
is like the cold, noisy sea at rest; the traffic in the
city neither
increases nor decreases like the sea's waters; the
tributes brought
to the king are as voluminous as the waters of the
Ganges; drums
sound like the waves of the sea; the noise in the

grass of the *palai* land is like the wind-tossed sea; women's faces shine like the morning sun; the king shines like the sun rising from the sea, and like the moon in the midst of stars; the king's fame will increase like the waxing moon, and that of his foes will decrease like the waning moon; the faces of ladies, now hid, now seen, are like the moon that the clouds now hides, and now reveals.

Further, we find the following comparisons: steeds fly as fast as the winds; the skin of women is like the mango shoot, and their beauty spots, like the back of flower petals; people flying from the enraged elephant are scared like those attacked both in front and back in the battle-field; the monk's pots are like stones scooped out; wafers are like honeycombs; the chant of Brahmins is like the hum of bees; and salted fish is like the sides of drums.

There is only one instance of a pure hyperbole in the poem, where the poet says that the Pandyan kings ruled from Comorin to the Himalayas. But others are only highly coloured language; elephants look like hills; the dust raised by horses conceals the sun; the speed of horses raises a breeze. However, we must say that our poet has a little more tendency to other early poets. exaggerate than

THE AUTHOR AND AGE

The author is Mankudimaruthanar, which means

Maruthanar of Mankudi, his native place. The period in which he lived, if

our reckoning of Nedunjeliyan's age is correct, was the last years of the first century, and the early years of the second. He is one of the earliest court poets mentioned in Tamil literature. He was the chief of the poets in Nedunjeliyan's court. The king himself, in the ode referred to above, says about the poet, "The chief of whom (the poets of his court) is Mankudi Maruthan of great glory and excellent scholarship." Besides this poem, there are fourteen short poems found in various anthologies attributed to him.

VERSIFICATION

The poem is written mostly in *vanchippa* metre, but here and there we have the *asiriappa*. (For notes on these metres see General Introduction to *Pattupattu*: Versification).

MADURAIKANCHI

Upon the bosom broad of the spacious earth
That's bounded by the sea on whose wide face
The leaping waves resound, are mountains high
Where honeycombs abound. The wind doth blow
Revolving to the right in the sky. The stars
In their appointed courses move. The sun
That burns and brings the day and the silv'ry moon
That brings the night with brilliance shine. The rains
Come down in their appointed season. Men
Thrive everywhere. The seeds bring forth their fruits
A thousand fold. The trees and fields do yield
Their wealth to all. The strong tall elephants
That bear the earth exult, their burden eased.
O scion of famous kings ! Thy ancestors
Ruled over such a world. In their domain
Food good to eat and things that charm the eye,
Enough and more, abounded. Statesmen wise
Had mansions high that stood in noble streets.
They ever spoke the truth and never lied.
They truly served their lords throughout their lives.
These kings for ages ruled there well esteemed.

O lord of hills from which do rivers flow !
Thy place is next the strong and ancient god
Who is not easy of approach, who drove

That southern king that had an army large
That was resistless. In his battlefields

That fear inspire, the demoness that drinks
The blood of crowds of tuskers great that fell
In war doth make dismembered corpses rise
And dance with her the noisy devil dance
On a hearth repulsive to the sight made up
Of heads of men. The expert demon cook
Doth boil in angry fire the shining blood
Of valiant kings, and stirs the carcass food
With ladles that once were the arms of men
Whose shoulders were with jewels decked. She serves

This food to strong victorious warriors brave
That ne'er retreat, nor are scared by their foes.

Descendant of the ancient Pandyan king!
Fine garlands made of gold adorn thy breast.
In battle-fields the raging elephant
That's trained for war and looks a hill

Is decked with fancy hood and frontlet bright.
Its cheeks exude ill-smelling clammy juice.
It roams with anger killing warriors brave.
The highly coloured dust the horses raise
Conceals the sun that lights the spacious sky.
The strong, fast chariots drawn by horses swift
Stir up a breeze resembling sweeping winds.
Thy warriors' mighty swords achieve success.
Thou dost contend with those two famous kings,
And other chiefs, and conquer them. Besides,
Thou dost attain great fame defeating kings
Of hilly tracts in which do rivers flow
And make a way through forests of thy foes.
This well enables thee to acquire the lands
That are less fortified with ease.

Illustrious one! Thou dost like thunderbolt
That burns up trees and breaks up hills strike down
Thy foes and boldly seize their fortresses
Protected well by forests strong, deep moats,

High-towered gates, high walls and mantlet rows
That send forth arrows sharp. Thou art the chief
Of those who led a life of victory great
And made their people carry out their hests,
Remembering olden times, and occupied
The land between the southern Comorin
And the northern high Himalayas.

Great victor! Thou dost seize great Saliyur

Named after the rice grown there. The ocean clear
Around it forms a deep moat, and the place
Looks like a mountain overcast with clouds.
Large ships on which high flags on mast-tops wave
Spread out their sails and cleave the rolling waves,

Tossed by the winds of the great dark, treble sea
On which rest clouds. They come to the sound of drums

To the port, their trade successful, with the gold
That much increases people's wealth.

MADURAIKANCHI

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O victor o'er those of the Kudda land!
In thy domain is heard the sound of those

Who stand in rows and irrigate their fields
From tanks with basket-pails to well-sweeps tied
And buckets strongly made and softly bound;
The sounds of those who tread out grain with bulls,
Of bells by oxen worn, of men in fields
Who scare away the birds, and of the dance
Of fisherwomen living near the sea
On heaps of sand on which grow *mullai* plants
That bear blue blossoms. In the other parts
Of this wide land is heard the sound of those
Who hold high festivals. Thou dost present
To rustic dancers who have shoulders shaped
Like drums dread tuskers huge and females large
With calves. Thou givest too a lotus fine
That's made of gold, and other jewels bright.

O king renowned that deals death on thy foes!
Thou hast subdued Mudyaveli, the land
That has a never-ceasing income rich.
E'en during summer when the hills are dry,
When massive clouds pour not abundant rains,
And the constant star doth change its wonted course,
The streams are filled with water, and the fields
Produce full harvest. Then the ripened rice

Doth rustle tossed by winds ; the harvesters
Are noisy in their work ; the birds create
A clamour great. The spacious sea that smells

Of fish, in which contending sharks do swim,
Resounds with rains that fall on forests cool,
Around which screw-pines grow with drum-like fruits
On sea-shore sands that look like moonlight white.
The din of fishermen who land from boats

That come in rows, the noise of those who make
White salt in large salt-pans of clayey soil,
The sound of those engaged in useful work
In hamlets small : these noises fill the air.
This land thou didst subdue, and regions four

In which live wealthy prosperous men engaged
In two pursuits esteemed above all else.

Thou didst fly like the wind, spread fire around,
Destroy the country of thy foes, encamp
At Alanganam scaring them, cut down
Their chiefs, and seize their drums. Triumphant
thus, Thou dost perform the rites of victory great.

Thou warrior great! Thou dost exalt thy friends
And bring destruction on thy hated foes.
Great men esteem thee, and thy praise is high.
Thou art beloved by those of Korkai's town
Containing hamlets in which divers live
Who dive for fishing chanks and pearls mature,
And people low that toddy drink.

O lion! Thou dost contend with Parava chiefs
That live in southern noisy villages,
Who eat rice boiled with meat and *kuvai* roots,
Who love to swear, and who attack their foes
With bows that smell of fish. These thou dost scare
With valour great for which thou art so famed.

Victorious chief! Thou dost obtain with ease
All precious things and distribute thy wealth
Without reserving it for selfish use.
Without the wish to stay at home secure
Thou dost depart to other lands to fight
With foes, go through their snowy wooded hills,
Invade their kingdoms, seize their forts, and stay
Some years in chosen lands to make them great.

Thou dost invade the lands of ancient foes
And lay waste well-kept fields. Red cruel flames Burn
up the soil of fertile *marutham* tracts
That never fail. Good habitations once

Become now deserts. Fields where cows did graze
Are tiger's lairs, and crowded villages
Are gone. Fair bangled modest maids forget
Their devil dance and rural measures now.
In halls where great men once met, now doth dance
The demoness with cruel eyes and cloven feet.
Attractive dames in distress cry at gates
Where people used to enter. Those who lived
In prosp'rous lands grow lean with hunger now,
And migrate to their kindred seeking help:
In mansions great, on black rice-bins burnt down

The combed owl and its mate now loudly screech.
On spacious ponds where water-lilies grew
Is now found *korai* grass of various kinds.

So tall that in their midst an elephant
Could stand concealed. In fields well-ploughed in which
Abundant crop was gathered at one time

MADURAIKANCHI

The hairy sow now wanders with its mate. The lands
of foes that would not thee obev Thus lie in ruins
great.

Thou dost place widespread in the battle-field
Fierce roaring elephants that own large legs
And upraised tusks. Thou dost like the god of war
Attack thy foes with troops large as the sea,
But never fall upon retreating men.
Thy army's shouts resound throughout the skies.
Thy arrows pour like rain. Thy many steeds
Raise up much dust. Conch shells and horns sound loud.
Thou dost thy foes subdue, reduce their states,
Pull down their walls, destroy their lands,
And weaken them and their related chiefs.
Thus dost thou make thy injured foes submit.
Thou dost make wide and ancient kingdoms thine,
Rule over them according to the laws
Of proper governance and customs old,
And teach them virtue's ways.

Just as the crescent in the western sky,
Which thy forbears adored, grows day by day,
So let the honour of thy victory grow
More in succeeding reigns. And as the moon
Wanes day by day in the east and darkness brings, So
may the fortune of thy foes grow less
As years go by. Though thou couldst paradise
Attain and eat ambrosia, being false,
Thou wouldst prefer to be sincere. Although
High gods and men of this wide earth round which Lie
roaring seas become thy foes, thou wouldst

Refuse to fear and cringe. E'en if the wealth
That Vanan stored in mountains of the south
Are given thee, thou wouldst not stoop to do
A wicked deed, as it would bring reproach
From everyone. Thou dost delight in praise
That comes from doing good. Thou hast no ties
With things that senses feel. May *maya* die
That much incites thee to the war, O chief!
There is but one great thing; I cannot speak
Of it. Thy widespread name be ever praised!

The wealthy city doth abound in various things Of worth that make the earth groan with their weight.

Its wealth decreases not; it ever grows.
The singers daily eat rich tasty food
And drink much cheering toddy spurning foods
Of other kinds, and are quite cloyed with them.
The songstresses whose voice is like the *yal's*
Receive small bangles for their undecked wrists,
And men, the cheering gifts of elephants.
The king delights his friends by urging them
To accept from him the various things he took
As spoils destroying fortresses of foes.
He works great ruin on their state. Although
He suffers much in fighting with the sword,
His zeal for war is much increased by frays.
He gives the many bards that come at dawn
To sing his praises chariots tall and steeds.
He gathers round him warriors who imbibe
Much toddy served in vessels made of leaves,

Who do wear *vanchi* blooms, and smear themselves
With sandal paste which on their bosom dries.
Those who submit to him obey his hests ;
Those who do not, he conquers, and exacts
From them much tribute. He encamps in tents
That are well fortified with lofty towers
Whose tops the soaring kites could scarcely reach.
There noisy drums are heard at dawn of day.
The foes he conquered and destroyed and kings
Who fought equipped with drums and many spears
Whose lands laid waste count more than the sands
The dark and noisy sea-waves heap on shore.
And many too were those he did destroy
Who once held sway admired throughout the earth.
On one side is the fertile *marutham* tract.
There clouds rise drinking from the eastern sea
And rest on mountains near the western shore.
They pour abundant rains both day and night
Accompanied by thunderbolts that scare
The crowds of elephants that live on hills
Where bamboos tall do grow. The rain that falls On
lands both high and low collect in pits
Formed by the *kalai* roots dug up, and swell
Into noisy floods. The rivers overflow
Their banks and fill the ponds, and coloured flow
Into the eastern sea, encircling fields of corn
In which plants grow so high that elephants

That stand in them are fully lost to view.
The ponds and pools contain bright lotus blooms
That grow with leaves on thorny stalks, fine flowers
Of *neithal* honey-scented, blossoms blue
With opened petals, blooms of the *ambal* vine
With tender leaves and also other flowers
Diffusing fragrance on which bees alight.
The tufted fisherman who trades in fish
Disturbs the pleasant sleep of water fowls
In pulling water plants aside when he
Doth catch his fish, and shouts while piling up
The fish he caught in the *marutham* tracts where grows
The *korkai* reed. There are, again, the sounds
Of the sugar press ; the noise of those who weed ;
The toddy-drinking ploughman's shouts who try
To pull the weak and suffering bull that fell
In the mud ; the pealing noise of those who reap
The corn with hardy hands in ripened fields
Where grows the *pahanrai* plant ; the joyful sound
Of those who celebrate the festival
Held on the pleasant sacred mount where fall
Refreshing rains with gentle sound ; the voice
Of many dames who with their husbands sport
In company, their wreaths in contact close ;
The noise made by the cranes in hamlets where
The *panars* clean their fish beneath the trees :
These sounds are wafted in the spacious sky.

In the *mullai* tract the *tinai* grain is reaped.
The sesamum and black-stemmed *varagu's* ears

Become mature. In dark pits gems are found.
The graceful stag whose herd is small doth leap
Together with its mate of modest eyes
And stirs the bright gold buried in the earth.
The rocks that lie spread out beneath the shade
Of bright-bloomed *konrai* trees are decked with
blooms In the midst of rice plants looking like sapphire.
The *musundai's* twisted shoots and silv'ry blooms
Of *mullai* vine fall down and scattered lie.
The *neithal* emerald green with the *thoyil* vies,
And, blossoming in ditches deep that have
Fine water clear, looks like the dancing stage
Which men versed in dramatic art devise.

In the *kurinchi* tract are mountains high where grow
The short-stalked *thorai* rice on uplands sown
From which the *akhil* tree and the sandal wood
Have been well cleared, the long-stalked pepper white,
White rice, and *aiyna* paddy mixed with it,
Green pepper, ginger, turmeric, *tinai*: these
And other plants do grew luxuriant there.
The sounds of watchers who the parrots scare
That sweep down on the hills, of jungle men
Who drive away the deer that eat the buds

Of the *avarai* vine on which grow gem-like blooms,
Of those that kill the pig that fell in pits
The hillmen dug, of those who pluck the blooms
That grow upon the twigs of branches large
Of strong-stemmed *vengai*, and of tigers strong
That kill the dusky boar : all these proceed
From hills whence issue rivers dark that form
From bright and silv'ry brooks.
In the desert tract that have the *palai* traits,
Because strong fires in bamboo forests lit
Burn up the bushes green, the elephant
Deserts the woods to find another feeding place.
The hollow bamboo stem that sounds much like
A well-played flute doth lose its form, as the joints Are
split. When whirlwinds blow with violent force Among
the clefts of large grim-looking hills
From which no river flows, a noise is heard,
Like that of wind-tossed sea, in the desert where
The *ugam* grass dries up and looks like straw.
The young men that do live in thatch-ed huts
On deer skins sleep, and wear wreaths made of leaves.
Their language is uncouth, and they keep guard
On crossways armed with bows. This is the tract With
hills that have no shades.

In the *neithal* tract are found fine sparkling pearls
Which the shining sea doth yield, bright bangles cut
And shaped straight with the file, and other wares
That merchants sell. Sea captains that sail o'er
The ocean high in showy ships that come
From large and distant countries take away

The salt that's formed in black and clayey pans,
Sweet tamarind and salted fish that look
Like sides of drums prepared by fishermen

On widespread sands. They bring fine horses here
And other precious things to barter them
For jewels fine that are here made. This wealth
Abounds increasing day by day.

Thus in this kingdom one finds all the tracts
Of various traits. In wealthy hamlets wide
Are spacious streets where festive drums are heard
And where prevail the devil dance and that
Of the rustic kind. Sweet fragrance fills the streets.
It is a thickly populated land
Whose fame is sung by bards. The city stands
In the centre of this realm.

Along the Vaigai's banks are groves of trees
That grow sky-high which noisy winds do toss,
On whose boughs apes, both male and female, play,
And peacocks screech ; and fragrant gardens too
On which are spread white sands the rivers bring
From mountains high. The *kongu's* pollened blooms
That scattered lie upon the stream that flows
So smooth look like a wreath adorning it.

In every sand-filled port are gardens fair
With various blooms where dwell the ancient tribe
Of *perumpanars*. There are those petty kings
That lost their lands whose kingdoms were as rich
As Manaviralvel's called Alembil

Whose wealth, wide fields, and crops attract the eye.
There too are chieftains who their subjects lost
That once had homes in spacious fertile lands.
These war-like chiefs that fought with elephants
And killed their foes come urged by hatred old
Against the great king who in various ways
Attempted to make peace with them. A ditch
With water sapphire blue, and deep as far
As there is earth, doth intervene, and makes
His foes retreat abandoning their drums.

The city walls are sky-high and contain
Strong sally-ports and gateways old and strong
On whose door posts is carved great Lakshmi's form.
Their strong-built doors are blackened by the ghee
Poured as libation. And above the gates
Are rooms that look as high as cloud-capped hills,
Through which pass streams of men like the Vaigai's flow.

The houses there have rooms of diverse kinds
That seem to reach the skies and windows broad
Through which the south wind blows.
In wide long streets
That are as broad as rivers crowds of folks
Of various race and speech create a noise
In the morning market-place when buying things.
The loudly sounding drum which makes a noise
Like the wind-swept ocean's roar announces loud
To all a festival. When instruments
Are played with ease, as one doth ply one's hands In
water, those who hear their music dance With
glee and shout in streets where morn and eve
The people buy and sell.

The streets present a very charming scene.
There one may see the various pennons used
At festivals : those flags of victory great
With various names presented to the chiefs
Who took day after day fort after fort ;

The flags received to mark a victory great
By a chieftain who, as dreadful as the sea,
Attacked his foes in war with spears, and raised
A stench by killing men and elephants
Arranged in lines, thus earning praises great;
The flags to indicate the shops in which
Much cheering toddy is for sale; and flags
Of various kinds that stand for great exploits;
And banners large. These wave like mountain streams.

The forces of the king pass through the streets.
There is the elephant that is in heat
Which marches to the sound of chanks in front
And back, kills those who use the prods enraged,
Flings down its keepers, breaks its pegs
Regarding not the strong fine-woven chains
With which it is secured, and moves about
Beyond its post, just as a ship at sea
Where *panars* fish and oysters move about,
Which furious winds lash, break the cordage strong
With which the sails are bound fast, tear the sails,
Strike down the mast, make the anchor roll about,
Impel the vessel into whirlpools strong,
And make it spin. Again, strong chariots pass
Swift like the winds and drawn by full-maned steeds
Resembling swans that red-legged fly as though
They wish to reach the bright-rayed sun, and cleave

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The air obscuring the bright and spacious sky.
Steeds prance along that wave their manes and run
At various speeds, trained well for martial feats
By trainers armed with whips. The soldiers huge
That look like dreadful elephants reel drunk
With toddy, and are in a fighting mood.

Here are seen traders selling various wares.
Some sell sweet cakes ; some, fragrant flowers exposed
On trays resembling sides of drums that sound
For warriors decked with fillets on their heads

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And anklets on their legs ; some, garlands neat
Arranged in various forms ; some, powders ground
By various men that look like pollens fine ;

Some, betel leaves that grow on creepers tall
And arecanuts with sweet paste mixed ; some, lime
Prepared by burning chanks. All these that trade
Fear for their precious lives just as do men
Attacked in battle-fields on double fronts.

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When dangers from the forces pass away,
Thev lose their fear and rest themselves beneath

The cooling shades of hill-like mansions tall.
Old dames who tie their well-combed hair
As white as dark-sea chanks do go about
From house to house with rare attractive things
And fragrant blooms in large and well-made trays.
These things they sell to young and pretty maids
Whose rosy skins shine like an image made
Of gold that glistens in the sun's bright rays.
Their bashful eyes excite the hearts of men;
Their lovely skins disturb their minds. Their teeth
Are strong and ordered well; their fair young breasts
Are marked with beauty spots that look as though
Fine paint was spilled on them. A peacock's form
They have; quite modest are they in their speech.
Their looks are charming; gentle is their walk.
They clap their hands and sport with callow youth.

The sea that loudly beats against the shore
Nor shrinks because the clouds its waters drink,
Nor swells because the waters of great streams
Flow into it; so is the traffic here.
It grows nor more nor less, as more the goods
Brought in, the greater is the sale. There is
Much noise on the seventh eve after full moon time

When a festival most rare is held and folks
Indulge in baths to cleanse themselves of sins.

Much noise is heard in the spacious market place

At morn in this great city justly praised
For splendid mansions tall.

Rich noblemen that rain their gifts as free
As clouds, when they are in a happy mood,
Drive swiftly in fine chariots strongly built
And drawn by steeds that fly as fast as winds.
They are in brightly figured garments clad
That charm the eye, and purple as the clouds
At eve when the bright sun's rays become more soft.
They wear swords golden-sheathed and outer cloaks
That on their shoulders wave. Their legs bear marks
Of straps that bind their ankle-rings. They wear
Large garlands of the neem, a well-known mark
Of strength, and on their splendid breasts lie wreaths
Of water-lilies bright that look like strings
Of gems mixed with fine necklaces of pearls.

On terrets high of mansions ordered well
Fair dames stand looking at the festival,
Adorned with jewels and gold ankle-rings
Containing gems that make a tinkling sound.
They wear bright bangles wrought with flower designs
And jewels made of bright gold purified
In shining fire. They use perfumes that spread
Their fragrance in the streets. Their pendants bright
Light up their faces fair. As banners broad
On strong poles fixed are tossed about by winds,
As sea waves are, their faces now appear,
And then are hid as is the moon by clouds.

At evening festivals when instruments
Are played, the worshippers with bodies washed
Make proper offerings to the dreaded gods
Of winkless eyes whom a heavenly halo girds,
Who wear fine fadeless blossoms and partake
Of votive rice. They worship too the god
Who is their chief and wields the battle-axe,
Creator of the five prime elements :
The sky, the air, fire, water and the earth.

Young pretty women wearing jewels bright
Escorted by their husbands take with them

Their children bright whose lovely faces look
Like pollened lotus blooms : a comely group.
They go with flowers and incense to the shrine
Where dwells the god who doth protect the world.

There are abodes that look like scooped out rocks
Where *rishis* live that chant the Vedas well
And carry out the proper rites prescribed.
They feel they are one with the Universe
And reach high heaven while yet they are on earth.
They ne'er depart from virtue, love all life,
And live a saintly life of joy supreme.
In gardens full of wondrous blooms live monks
Revered by votaries who offer them
Sweet honied flowers that do attract the bees
And incense sweet. They understand the past
And see the future as well as the events

That happen now, which they expound to men.
These know all things in heaven and earth,
And carry for their penance small-mouthed pots
In many-threaded loops that look as though
They were well-chiselled out of stones. These groves
As cool as ponds belong to mansions high.
Their copper-coloured walls are painted well;
And are so tall that they could not be seen
Without uplifted eyes, and look like hills.

There are just judges who expound the law
And from the suitors' minds remove all fear,
  Distress and too much greed. They do their work
Avoiding passion and all levity.
With fair impartial minds they ponder things
As though they weighed them in a pair of scales.
There too are turbaned counsellors who bear
The name of *kavithi*. Like hermits bold
That get the bliss of heaven with holy rites,
They check the actions of the king, both good
And bad, examining his ways to see
That he preserved his virtues and his love.
They take good care to guard their own good name,
And being free from blame are much esteemed.

Good merchants who well follow virtue's rules
Have splendid mansions that appear like groups
Of many hills on whose high tops rest kites

Before they higher fly. In them they store
Their goods and foodstuffs rare of various kinds.
They buy the produce of the hills, the plains,
And the sea, and other things of wealthy lands:
Gems, pearls, and gold, and trade in them.

There is a council large of officials
Of four kinds noted for their counsel wise.
They're like the four-tongued Kosars that appeared
In halls of Palayan, the chief of Mohoor rich,
Whose crops ne'er failed as rains unceasing fell.

Those who well fashion bangles fine from chanks,
The goldsmiths that make jewels bright from gold
Well purified in fire, those who sell gold
That's well assayed, those who do trade in clothes,
Those who buy copper by the weight, those who
Stitch garments fine, those who sell well-culled blooms
And sandal-wood, those who could pictures paint
Of various things in motion, those who draw
With accuracy things that catch the eye,
And others gather. Weavers small and great
Display bright, folded garments, short and long,
That look like shining sands that edge the sea.
All these are found in four well-crowded streets.

In the audience hall the king sits decked with wreaths.
He owns domains surrounded by the sea.
Him bards exalt that play on curv-ed drums.

There is much noise in restaurants in which

Are served along with other food, the pulps
Of fragrant honied jak and other fruits
Of various kinds like mangoes sweet, both ripe
And unripe, greens whose soft, short, unrolled leaves
Abundant grow on vines when showers do fall
In due time; sugar-candy sweet that tastes
Ambrosia-like; rice cooked with chunks of flesh
That's relished much; roots edible dug up
From deep earth, tasty rice; and dainties good
That are enjoyed much everywhere.

The bustle of the evening market-place
Sounds like the din heard in a sea-port town
To which are brought so many diverse goods

By merchants who rare jewels took for sale
To distant countries wide, and now return
In vessels large that do at flood time come
From the deep ill-smelling sea into shallows dark
At midnight. Or the noise may be compared
To clamour made by various birds at eve
Returning to their nests.

The bright-rayed sun abates its angry heat
And nears the western hills at evening time.
The full moon grown mature arises in the east,
Diffusing glorious light that matches day,
And brings in night. Bright maids with deer-like eyes
Light up their lamps, and well bedecked enjoy
Themselves with those with whom they wish to mate.
They weave wreaths out of water-lilies culled
That have cool, fragrant petals fair ; they shake
Their fine long locks and spread the fragrance wide
Of sandal paste, and soak their clothes with smoke Of
akhil sweet. The loud and painful sounds
At evening heard throughout the town then cease.
They thus enjoy the pleasures they desire.
They then take fine and sweet-stringed *yals* on which
Seven notes are played, and strike up tuneful songs.
They twine their locks with chaplets made of blooms
That, bright and cool, diffuse their fragrance wide
In the air. They wave their hands that they may make
Their pretty bangles shine. The blossoms bright
That newly opened send their fragrance wide
Throughout the streets. They set their ornaments

That were disordered right again, and then
Wear many water-lily's blooms on which
Bees love to settle, and which are as sweet
As buds by fingers stirred to spread their scent.
These blooms and others many-hued look like
The flowers that grow so wide on jungle shrubs.
These women charm the young and wealthy men
Who come from far and near desiring them,
With lying and deceptive words, and press
Their well-decked breasts to theirs in close embrace,
Pretending love till they secure their wealth.
As swarms of soft-winged bees that honey drink
From minute pollens quite forget the blooms
When they are honeyless, so these desert
Their lovers causing them intense distress.

Like birds that are in search of fruits mature,
These rich and well-born men and others come

Attracted by the shining light in which
These women sit adorned with bangles bright
And jewels made of precious, gleaming gold.
In houses where the household deities dwell
These harlots charm the hearts of men who come,
And rob their wealth, resembling cruel nymphs
That sport with zest in the bright blue sky. They dance
With glee on sands in bathing places cool
And deep. Then leaving them they pluck the shoots
That grow on branches rich, and with the buds
Of water-lily red weave garlands long
That reach down to the border of their dress.
They go to pleasant houses where they play
The game of gross deceit.

Contentious *maravars* with faces scarred
In unretreating fights in village streets
Where a festival is held to mark the birth
Of Vishnu dark who wears a thick gold wreath
To mark his triumph over Avunars,
Do reel about adorned with *thumbai* buds
Quite drunk with toddy strong ignoring nails
Kept in the long-edged blue dress of mahouts
And scattered in the way of elephants
Whose faces are much scarred, when they pursue
The beasts that run amok.

Young wealthy mothers who by bearing sons
Fulfil their husbands' wish, take baths in pools
To purify themselves and make their large young breasts
Exude sweet milk; while those in early days
Of motherhood go with their kindred close
To gods to pray that they may be much blest.
They play the *sevvali* tune on fair sweet *yals*
Well-strung to sound in unison with drums
And tabors soft. They march to shrines with lights
And carry offerings such as gifts of food.
They worship with their palms together joined,
And share the offered food with priestesses.
Again, as soothsayers dread attribute ills
To Muruga, women wearing *kanchi* blooms
That ope in rainy months, adore with zeal
This god who wears the blooms of *kadamba*.

To strident sounds of instruments they tread
Rude rustic measures in the temple courts
Embracing one another joining hands,
And much indulge in noisy cries and songs.
All these together mixed cause clamour great
Such as one hears at rustic festivals
In which they celebrate great Nannan's day.
Thus ends the first half of the night.

The sound of conch shells cease. The shops are shut,
The screens put down, where things have been on sale.
Bejewelled modest dames retire to sleep.
Breadmakers that sold jelly wafers soft
That look like strip-ed honeycombs and cakes
With coconut sugar sweet and pulse stuffed in
And flour with jelly mixed, are now asleep.
So are the men that dance at festivals.
Those lying down are steeped in slumber sweet,
Resembling the cold and noisy sea at rest.
It is now dead of night, and goblins dread
And goddesses with vampires roam about
Assuming human forms.

The burglars in the town are dark, with skins
Resembling those of elephants. They're armed
With chisels sharp that cut through stone and wood.
Their swords hang by their sides. Their feet are shod
With leather sandals, and they wear a dress
Of minute workmanship. Their thighs are hid
With sharp bent knives, and belts of many hues
Well wrought they wear, and hanging round their waists
Are ladders made of ropes. These roam about
Intent on stealing precious things. They hide
Themselves in the twinkling of an eye.

But there are watchmen who with ease find out

The lairs of burglars, and they pounce on them
On a sudden, as a tiger, on a boar,
They work with sleepless eyes devoid of fear.
Their valour is admired by those who know
The burglar's art. They are the city's guard,
And have a minute knowledge of the law
From which they ne'er depart. None could elude
Their arrows sharp. At midnight e'en when rains
Do fall and flood the streets where chariots roll,

They do not in their duty fail, but go
About with zeal. It is the middle watch
When gods do move about, and no one works.
This portion of the night thus ends.

It is now morning, and the Brahmins chant
The Vedas, and their voice is like the hum
Of bees that drink the honey of the flowers
That blossom in sweet-scented lakes. The bards
That play on *yals* do sweetly tune the strings
And sing the *marutham* songs. Mahouts now feed
Their elephants. The horses that are stalled

And used in chariots tall their fodder spurn.
The traders that sell various dainties smear

The floors with cow dung. Toddy sellers name
The price of drinks. The housewives that did pass
The night with mates beloved in sweet embrace
Are now astir to do their work at dawn,
And go about adorned with jewels fine
Of shining gold that like the lightning streak
Doth dazzle the eye. The screech of opening doors
Of strong-walled houses is now loudly heard.
The drunkards old that speak with stuttering voice
Well primed with drink shout loud. Some standing up,
And others seated, utter words of praise.
The sounds of those who eulogise is heard.
Those who announce the hours proclaim them loud.
The bright-combed cock proclaims that it is dawn.
The males of swans and cranes invite their mates.
And peacocks call their hens. The mingled roar
Of mated elephants, of various beasts
And of strong tigers caged, doth fill the air.
Dames wearing jewels bright whose faces shine
Like lightning in the clear, blue sky are cheered
By wine, and spurn the embraces of their mates.
They sweep the sand-strewn courtyards where the bees
And beetles hum, and green arecanuts fall.
The yards look like the ground on which bright gold
Was melted in a fire. It is bestrewn
With faded blooms and many pretty things,
And looks as though a string of pearls unstrung
And other gems lie scattered. Darkness flees;
It is now dawn that brings security.

To the town are brought huge elephants with tusks
Upraised, abandoned in the battle-field

That overthrew broad-shouldered warrior foes
And wrought great havoc too on other men.
Swift horses too are brought here from the lands
Of foes ; the herds that angry, strong and cruel men
Brought driving with their spear destroying foes
By the light of burning towns ; the rampart gates
Of towns impregnable seized from their foes ;
The jewels brought as tributes day by day
To the king to whom his foes obeisance make ;
And many other things as measureless
As the waters of the splendid Ganges great
That with a thousand mouths flows into the sea.
This is the Madura town far-famed and rich
And splendid like the abode of gods.

The king reposes on a bed adorned
With garlands rich. He doth embrace fair dames
Who shine like morning rays the bright sun pours
Ascending in the sky o'er *asoka* groves
On whose dense branches grow bright fire-red blooms
On which bees feed. They wear gold jewels bright
Inlaid with gems, and bring distinction great
To the land. They have the peacock's pretty looks
And a fair skin of the tint of mango shoots
O'erspread with beauty spots resembling lines
Appearing on the back of petals fair.
Their teeth are sharp, their pretty ears adorned

With rings are bright and low; their faces shine
Like fire-red petals of the pollened blooms
Of the lotus dear to gods that densely grows
In ponds, and they wear bangles chosen well.
He rises from sweet sleep with pleasant thoughts. He
looks like the painted picture of a god.
He smears thick sandal paste upon his breast
On which lie ropes of pearls. Around the neck
Are garlands made of various blossoms which
Striped honey bees and other insects seek.
Rings made of gold inlaid with sparkling gems
Along with bracelets bright his sturdy hands

Adorn. The clothes that he puts on are starched,
And over it he wears fine jewels bright
That makes him look imposing quite.

The soldiers great in war that bar the way
Of foes and put them to the rout exalt

The valour thy victorious swords reveal.
Thou dost invite brave warriors who received
Upon their brows the arrows sped from foes,
And who with strong arms held the reins of steeds;

Those valiant men that fought from ramparts tall
Whose narrow moats were made of well-hewn stones

The wounded leaders great who did cut down
Big elephants advancing into battle-fields
That were like burning fires; those men who helped
In making towns well flourish like the abodes
Of gods once more, observed well ancient ways,
Fought for their friends, wore *thumbai* blooms of gold,
Were wounded on their chests which much-stained shields
Well joined together gapless did protect,
And fought with spear-heads fixed to handles long;
And those who had a crowd of elephants,
Who smeared themselves with fragrant sandal paste,
Who wore imposing wreaths and who performed
Great deeds. All these and others he invites
To enter at his gates. He welcomes too
Bards, singers, songtresses, and dancers all
Without inquiring who they are. To them
And to their kin who go to him for gifts
He gives tall chariots decked with lotus tops,
And elephants.

In various places toddy is well strained,
And under trees fat sheep are killed for food.
When flesh is fried its blood doth melted flow.
Food fried in ghee doth make a sizzling noise.
The coloured smoke that issues from the food
When it is flavoured seems to spread like clouds.

Thou art as great as that great Pandyan king
Named Muttukudumi who earned high praise
Performing many sacrificial rites,
And who acquired high truths from sages great
Well-versed in ancient lore, and experts great
In holy practices that teach like Nediyon
Who in himself embraces all the world.
Thou art by many perfect, worthy men
Praised much for wisdom high and virtues great.
Thou hast as gifts bestowed rare, precious things,
Increased thy kingdom's wealth, learnt worthy lore,
Established well thy fame, and, like the sun

That in the ocean shines, and like the moon
Amidst the stars, thou art distinguished well
Among thy noble kindred. Kosars armed
With cruel swords whose chieftain is that prince,
Great Maran, decked with woven wreaths, who made
His name secure ; the famous kinsmen five
Possessed of jewels rare ; and vassal chiefs
That warlike are and others heed thy hests,
Because thy virtues are esteemed so high.
Drink thou the fragrant wine from golden cups
By maids bejewelled served, and happy be
Throughout the allotted portion of thy life.

NOTES

5. *revolving to the right.* A conventional expression. *P. P. Padai,* l. 27. Cf. *T. M. Padai,* l. 4; *M. Pattu,* l. 4.
See Note on

12-18. *elephants — earth.* According to mythology support the earth. The kings ruled their kingdoms so well of the elephants was lightened.

four elephants that the burden

19. *spoke the truth.* Truthfulness is a placed a great value. Cf. *P. Palai* l. 245.

virtue on which early Tamils

22. *lord of hills.* Nedunjeliyan, the Pandyan king.

23. *ancient god.* An obscure passage. Three explanations have been given. Nach. says that the god is Agastiyar, who drove out Ravana. Others say that it refers to Siva that overcame Yama, the god of death, who is sometimes called the Lord of the South. The best explanation seems to be Rama that conquered Ravana. The meaning is that Nedunjeliyan is fit to be ranked next to Rama.

26-28. A very striking, but revolting picture. Cf. ll. 73-87; *S. P. Padai* ll. 262-266.

T. M. Padai

46-47. A hyperbole.

51. *two famous kings.* The Chera and Chola kings.

67-68. *Comorin — Himalayas.* A hyperbole. Cf. *S.* l. 60.
P. Padai

69. *Saliyur.* Some render it as Nellore. Both "a town named after rice," and both of them were great

the names imply
Pandyan seaports.

75. *treble sea.* Probably sea supplied by the waters and rains. For other interpretations see note on l. 514 *P.*

of rivers, springs
P. Padai.

82-83. *Basket pails; buckets.* The words இறைசால். These names refer to different kinds of

in the text are ஆம்பி and
buckets used in irrigation.

97. *Mudiaveli.* A minor chief's territory.

101. *the constant star.* The change of the course of a to bring disaster. Cf. *P. Palai* l. 2.

star was thought

119-123. A description of the battle of Alanganam, one of the great decisive battles of the ancient world, where young Nedunjeliyan defeated the Chera and Chola monarchs. See Introduction: Nedunjeliyan.

127. *Korkai's town.* Korkai was the first kingdom. It was a great seaport, and was famous

capital of the Pandyan
for trade in pearls.

145-168. Compare this vivid picture of the devastation of a territory with a similar picture in *P. Palai* ll. 294-334.

171. *god of war.* Muruga.

conquered

182-184 and 191-202. These lines give an character.

account of the king's splendid

202. *May Maya die.* Maya means illusion. The Aryans regarded this world as an illusion, while the Dravidians took life seriously and enjoyed it. The object of the poem is brought out in these lines, viz., to wean the king from absorption in worldly ambition and to encourage him to live the higher life. These lines also show how far Aryan ideas penetrated the Tamil land during the reign of this king.

204. *one great thing.* Realisation of oneself as a part of the Universal Soul by the loss of all desires. This is a Vedantic doctrine.

225. *Vanchi blooms.* They are worn by warriors of the *mullai* region. See General Introduction to *Pattupattu : Agam* and *Puram*.

239 seq. Here begins the description of the five kinds of regions of the Pandyan kingdom. This kingdom had all the five regions, while the Chera had only the *kurinchi* (hill), and the Chola, only the *marutham* (field) tracts.

239-278. Description of the *marutham* tract.

272. *the pleasant sacred mount.*
sacred to Muruga, described in *T.*
poem.

Tiruparankunram, one of the shrines
M. Padai. See Introduction to that

277. *the panars.* They
dwellings on the outskirts of
pattu : Attupadai.

were considered to be low, and had their
the city. See General Introduction to *Pattu-*

279-293. Description of the *mullai* tract.

294-311. Description of the *kurinchi* tract.

312-327. Description of the *palai* tract.

328-340. Description of the *neithal* tract.

In the description of the *neithal* region we have carried on with foreign countries.

an account of the trade

349-371. A description of the land along the Vaigai.

372. Here begins the description of the city of important part of the poem.

Madura, the most

374. *Lakshmi.* The goddess of wealth.

376-378. *gates — hills.* The city of Madura was noted for its lofty towers, and so was called Nanmadakudal (the city of four towers), or simply Kudal as in *T. M. Padai* in line 71 of the text.

392. Here begins the description of the morning scenes.

393-405. Various flags are described. There is a similar description of the flags of Kaveripattinam in *P. Palai* ll. 181-210. These flags were hung to indicate public places.

413-419. For the vivid simile see Introduction :

Similes.

426-427. *the soldiers — elephants.* An exaggeration.

439. *Fear — lives.* The idea
king's forces so throng the streets
the streets.
is that the traffic is so great and the
that people are afraid to pass through

447-458. Description of female beauty.

465-470. *seventh eve.* It was a custom of people
day after the full moon.

to bathe on the seventh

467. *bathe — sins.* Washing away sins by
belief than a Dravidian one. Cf. *P. Palai*, l. 110.

bathing is more an Aryan

471. Here begins the description of evening scenes.

497-511. From these lines we can form an
worship of the people. See Introduction.

idea of the religious life and

502-505. *the god.* Siva.

511. *protect the world.* Vishnu.

513. *rishis — Vedas.* Brahmin ascetics.

515. *one with the Universe.* The Vedanta doctrine
is that man is a
part of the Universal Soul.

516. *high heaven — earth.* They
from birth's bonds.
become *jivan muktas,* those freed

519. *in gardens — live monks.*
While Brahmin monks lived in cavesd
Buddhist and Jain monks lived in gardens.

533-538. Impartiality is always insisted on as a
judges.

necessary quality in

539. *turbaned councillors.* A topical touch.

540. *kavithi.* Cf. Muhammadan *kathi.*

hermits. The kings of old stood in awe of ascetics,
by them.

and were guided

547-554.
celebrated in

merchants — rules. The honesty of merchant farmers
the well-known passage in *P. Palai* ll. 244-251.

is:

555-559. *officials — four kinds.* There are five kinds of officers: ministers, priests, generals, ambassadors, and spies. Four are spoken of here as ministers have already been described.

537. *four-tongued Kosars.* Kosars were a northern tribe from the Tulu country who invaded the South and settled down in the region now known as the Coimbatore District. They spoke four languages probably because they came from four language areas: Telugu, Kanarese, Tulu and Tamil. Even now one hears these four languages spoken in this district.

Nach., however, explains these lines as Kosars belonging to four
who never departed from their plighted word.

564. *Those who buy copper.* Coppersmiths.
castes.

567. *Various things in motions.* The pictures seem to be in motion.

576 seq. The account of the evening market is resumed.

587-596. An allusion to the sea-faring life of the people.

597. Here begins the account of the night life of the people.

625-649. An account of the harlots of the city.
comitant of civilisation!

A necessary con-

654. *Avunars.* They correspond to the Titans of

Greek mythology.

661. *bearing sons.* They thought that the birth of a from evils in the next birth.

son freed them

667. *sevvali tune.* A tune that is sung in the evening.

673. *soothsayers.* Priests of Muruga called *Velans.*

678. *rustic measures.* Noisy dancing and singing was of Muruga festivals. Cf. *P. Palai,* ll. 177-180.

a regular feature

683. *Nannan's day.* Nannan is the patron referred to in *M. P. Kadam.* This is one of the few references to Nannan in early Tamil poems.

688-689. *wafers — honeycombs.* Such a preparation is now called தோட்டக்.

690-691. *cakes — stuffed in.* They are now known as கொழுக்கட்டை.

713-714. *who know the burglar's art.* This means those who are conversant with the art of thieving. We may infer from this that thieving was reduced to a science.

721. *gods.* Minor gods.

728. *marutham songs.* Songs peculiar to the *marutham*

741-742. *Some standing — praise.* Cf. *M. P. Kadam* l.

region.

98.

749. *tigers caged.* There must have been a zoo in the city.

753. *sweep — courtyard.* The remnants of the night's revelries.

773-774. For a similar comparison see *M. P. Kadam* ll. 657-659.

779. *embrace fair dames.* Polygamy was prevalent in those days.

782-792. Another description of female beauty.

801. *starched.* A topical touch.

817. *thumbai blooms.* They were worn by the warriors of the *neithal* region. See General Introduction to *Pattupattu : Agam* and *Puram.*

836. *flavoured.* The flavouring process is called
837-860. Indirect advice and tactful praise.

in Tamil தாளித்தல்.

838. *Muthukudumi.* A Pandyan king
salay (the performer of many sacrifices).

who had the surname of Palapal.

842. *Nediyon.* Krishna who taught Arjuna. His
contained in the Bhagavat Gita.

teachings are

MALAIPADUKADAM

MALAIPADUKADAM

INTRODUCTION

NAME

The title of the poem means literally the secretion (*kadam*) oozing (*padu*) from the mountain (*malai*). The mountain resembles the elephant in heat, from which flows a secretion. Secretion here is metonymy for sound. In plain words the title means the sounds issuing from a mountainous region. This title is taken from a significant phrase found in lines (tr.) 347-348, where the echoes in the mountain region are compared to the noise made by roaring elephants in rut. The poem has another name, *Koottharattupadai*, which means a poem that directs actors (*kootthars*) to a patron. (See General Introduction to *Pattupattu : Attupadai*).

SUBJECT MATTER

The poem is mostly a description of the mountainous country of king Nannan, and of his qualities. It begins with an account of actors, their women and their various musical instruments. This is followed by a description of the beauty of the female singers in the troupe. Then Nannan's virtues, valour and the greatness of his capital are described. A long description of the flowers, fruits and trees, and of the birds and animals of his kingdom follows. The perils of the journey through the dominions are then vividly brought out. The dancers are told of the hospitality they would receive on the way. After an account of the hunting tribes that dwell on the hills, we come to the portion from which the poem derives its title : the various sounds heard in the mountains. The king's *mullai* lands where shepherds herd their cattle, the fertile *marutham* land in which farmers cultivate their fields and the *neithal* tract inhabited by fishermen are also described. Then follows a description of the guarded palace gates and a graphic account of

the tributes piled before

Nannan's palace. The poem concludes with an account of the king's virtues, his administration, his wealth, the gracious way in which the actors are treated and the generous rewards given to them.

NANNAN

The patron whose glories are sung in this poem is Nannan, about whose exploits very little is known. He is known only by this poem, a casual reference in *Maduraikanchi* (tr. l. 688), and allusions in a few other early poems. We are told in this poem that he was the son of a king of the same name. We also know from the poem that he was the ruler of the region watered by the Seyaru which is now known as Chanmuganathi. The mountains of his land are known as the Naviram hills, which are said to be the abode of Siva. His capital was called Chenkama or Chenkamma, and was situated west of Tiuvannamalai. The country over which he ruled is called Palakunrakoddam (land of many hills), which is one of the 24 divisions of the Thondai district of the Chola kingdom.

He is spoken of in this poem as a brave warrior who like Siva inspires fear in the hearts of his enemies. He was surrounded by wise counsellors, and his courtiers were magnanimous in the treatment of learned men who came to his court. There is a reference to his wife as a lady of great chastity.

SOCIAL LIFE

There are in this poem a number of references to the customs and conditions peculiar to the age. The other name, *Kootttharattu-padai*, is given to the poem because great prominence is given to actors and music in it. In the opening lines of it there is a good account of the various musical instruments that were used in early times: the big drum, the *aguli* (small drum), the cymbal, the horn, the long oboe, the pipe, the flute, the *karadikai* (a peculiar drum), the *ellari* (large cymbal) and the *padali* (wide-faced drum). They were carried in bags, and resembled a bunch of jak fruit. There was dancing at festivals, and hillmen and their wives danced in pairs to amuse themselves. There were specially constructed dancing stages. There were special songs sung by women when they pounded rice. Hillmen's wives sang songs to alleviate the pain caused by wounds received by their husbands while hunting. They had separate tunes appropriate to the five various conventional tracts. Of these *kurinchi* and *marutham* tunes are mentioned in the poem. (See General Introduction to *Pattupattu*: Music). Musicians were kept at

the court of the king. The travelling *kootthars* were instructed to sing according to the rules of music. All this shows that music was then in an advanced state.

Rice was the staple food, and there were two kinds: white rice and bamboo rice which were grown on wild lands. The people were not vegetarians. Vegetarianism was introduced into South India only after the advent of the Aryans, and it was strengthened by Buddhist and Jain influences. People ate not only the flesh of rams, but also that of porcupines, pigs and boars, with the blood still fresh. Honey, edible roots, buffalo curds preserved in bamboo pipes and *aval* prepared from crushed rice are articles of food mentioned. They carried about their foodstuffs on poles made of elephant tusks. There is an account

of a delicious meal prepared by mixing the flour of the jak fruit seeds, tamarind fruit and butter milk. Among fruits, the jak, the mango and the plantain (*mukkani* or three great fruits) are mentioned. The jak fruit seems to have been abundant, as we note that they floated down rivers and were eaten by monkeys. The traditional hospitality of the Tamil people is brought out in many places. The people are said to hurry to welcome strangers as they would to rescue a drowning man, and invite them to share pot-luck with them. They prepared
their guests, and the women too modest to

delicious meals for
give the invitation
themselves asked their children to do so, and these called the strangers by some term of relationship.

A noteworthv custom mentioned is that a woman discarded her bangles when she became a mother. The women wore their hair in five-fold plaits. Ordinary women wore practically no woven clothing, but covered their bodies with leaves and flowers. Rich women, however, wore fine-spun clothes, as may be inferred from the mention of such garments given to dancing women, It is curious that the emphasis then was more on ornaments than on clothing, and even nude women wore plenty of orna- ments. The rude hunters' wives decorated themselves with flowers. People in hilly places lived in huts walled with clay and covered with thatch. Poor people slept on mats made of deer skins. The cities had palaces and very wide streets. The king sat on a throne in the audience hall, and was surrounded by his counsellors.

Grass knots were placed on cross-roads to indicate the proper path in which people should go. There were memorial stones erected to mark the places in which heroes were buried.

Buying and selling were by barter. People amused themselves watching bull-fights. Fire was made in the hill districts by

rubbing sticks together. Statues are mentioned. Did they know sculpture? That no remains of statues are found is significant.

The mention of Pleiades brings up the question whether the people of South India had a system of astronomy in those days. The text has *al* (ஆல்) which means fire or shining object. This is only an abbreviated form of *alarkuttam* (group of shining ones) corresponding to the Sanskrit *agninakshetram.* No doubt the Aryans must have enlarged the Dravidians' knowledge of astronomy, but the latter seem to have had a system of their own, however rudimentary.

RELIGION

The king seems to have been a devotee of Siva, as there was a famous shrine of this god on the Naviram hill, but the ancient war-god, Muruga, also was worshipped. Gods were supposed to reside in pillars dedicated for the purpose. In fact, before images came into use, these *kandus* (pillars) were the objects of worship. The people were reverent, and the actors were told that they should worship the "great god," probably Siva.

There is a significant phrase "dare not forget the past" (tr. ll. 264) which means the forgetting of the actions of a previous birth. The word used in the text is *ool* (ஊழ்). Did the Dravidians believe in karma and transmigration before the Aryans came? The fact that a pure Tamil word was used indicates that ancient Tamils had at least a glimpse of this belief. (Cf. *Kurinchipattu* tr. l. 30 and *P. Palai* tr. l. 48).

Two superstitious practices are mentioned: the observance of auspicious hours for starting on a journey, and the praise and worship of malignant beings that are likely to harm men. Even at the present day the cobra is given the flattering name of *nallapambu* (good serpent) with the same object. The Greeks and Romans called the Furies, Eumenides (the kindly ones) for the same reason.

LITERARY MERITS

Malaipadukadam is one of the finest of the Ten Idylls, and, if we may judge only by the gorgeous pictures of Nature, it is easily the best. The poem is one stretch of pen-pictures of Nature beautified by countless similes. So it is hard to pick out for special notice particular passages. However, we may refer to a few that come readily to mind.

Nature Pictures

In the long passage in the first part of the poem the poet gives us pictures of the scenic beauties of the hamlets that are

around Nannan's capital: their vegetation, their flowers, and their fruit trees. Then the poet describes with equal vividness the mountain districts; its peacocks, and its honeycombs. Then there are the arresting pictures of forests thick with shady trees which the sun's rays do not penetrate. Again, there are the *marutham* lands with their rice-fields along the river Seyaru. Finer still is the portraiture of the king's palace in front of which are heaped the various presents brought as tributes to him. They are said to resemble the things that the Kaveri sweeps along its course and heaps on the delta at its mouth. Now we come to the finest passage of them all, which is the central theme of the poem: the description of the mountain echoes. The sound of the streams that flow rapidly from the summits of the hills and of the nymphs who bathe in them; the shouts of elephant tamers; the noise made by hillmen who guard the crops; their dirge for those who were killed in the hunt; the songs of the wives who wish to lessen the pain of their wounded husbands; the shouts of women who gather *vengu* blooms; the thundering noise made by the pregnant elephant when attacked while her mate is away; the cries of grief of the monkey that let slip her young one; the shouts of those who pilfer honeycombs; the war-like cries of hillmen; the noise of the drums that accompany the dancing of hillmen with their wives; the sounds of streams as they flow along stony ground and fall into caverns; the shouts of keepers in extricating elephants caught in the eddies of the wild river; the shouts of damsels driving away birds with their bamboo scaring-rods; the noise made by the fighting of bulls and elks and the accompanying shouts of those who witness the fight; the shouts of boys who set calves to tread out jak seeds; the songs of those who pound the *tinai* grain; the noise of the drums of those who scare away beasts from their gardens: all the echoes of these noises blended together is *malai-padukadam*, and is like the roar of the elephant in rut.

We may select a few arresting single pictures in the descriptions referred to above. The *musundai* creeper's blossoms resemble Pleiades in the broad, black sky; peacocks stand tired after dancing with their tails down; the monkeys leap on the forks of tall bamboos; jungle men stand on high platforms driving away beasts and birds by clapping their hands; the Seyaru flows revolving like the potter's wheel; the lonely stag stands in the forest crying loud; crabs crawl about in the rice-fields; bulls charge at people bellowing; the red-eyed deer runs swiftly out of fear; and the sugar-cane stalks tossed about by strong winds appear like the spears of an army.

These passages show not only the poet's capacity for Nature painting, but also his keen perception for Nature's beauties.

Similes

There are at least seven similes in the poem. But none is of the elaborate kind. Nor is there any long drawn-out simile. A number of these are conventional comparisons. Some are obvious ones. We will notice only such as are striking and original.

In addition to those already noticed under Nature-pictures we may mention the following: the *avarai* blossoms look like drops of curds; their fruits are like sickles; the *varagu's* double stalks are like fingers joined together when a man is arguing; the unopened flowers (*potthi*) of plantains on the hills look like a spear with the point directed against the hill; the *asni* jak fruit when opened looks like a sore mouth; the jak fruit is like a drum; a drum, on the other hand, is like a jak fruit; the strings of the *yal* could be loosened or tightened like a lady's bangle (cf. tr. ll. 290-291 *S. P. Padai*); the feet of songstresses are like the tongues of panting dogs (cf. tr. l. 28 *S. P. Padai*); the owl's double note is like the sound of the drum beaten on both sides; the locks of children resemble the wool of sheep; the roots of the peacock's feathers are like cowrie shells; arrows fall like rain; different kinds of food are like listening to different tunes; the slices of *varal* fish are like the sides of a drum; *kanthal* blooms look like broken bangles; the streams that flow from hills look like flags of victory; rocks close to each other look like elephants contending in sport; and the clouds on hills are like carded wool.

There is only one hyperbole: pythons are said to swallow elephants. There are a few exaggerated statements such as are used in ordinary speech: Nannan's name would last as long as the world lasts; the hills are sky-high; *kanthal* flower petals are so red that eagles mistake them for flesh; crowds of elephants look like clouds; the palaces touch the sky (sky-scrapers!), and so are elephants; the selfish kings that lived before Nannan are more than the sands of the Seyaru.

There is a piece of puerile criticism of the poem to which Nachchiniarkiniar draws attention. A latter day critic says that the poet has made himself open to the fault of *anandakuttam* (ஆனந்த குற்றம்) because in line 141 of the Tamil text he has the words தீயினன்ன (fire-like) which sounds like placing the name of Nannan along with the inauspicious word, fire. It may be explained that some latter day critics classified literary faults under six heads, one of which they called *sollanandakuttam* (fault in phraseology). But that prince of critics, Tholkappiar, classified such faults under ten heads, of which this is not one.

Such an absurd canon of criticism cannot be found in any other language. This is a good example of the artificial, over-refining tendency of the critical age that followed the creative period of Sangham literature.

THE AUTHOR AND AGE

The author of the poem is Perumkausikanar. From his surname Iraniamuduatthu we know his native village which is situated in the Madura District. From his accurate description of various musical instruments and his frequent references to singing and dancing we may infer that he was versed in music. From his name we may infer that he was a Brahmin. Two of the poems attributed to him are contained in the anthology known as *Nattrinai*. We find the name of Kausikanar as a poet elsewhere also, but we do not know whether we can identify it as belonging to our poet.

As it is difficult to know the period in which Nannan lived, we cannot say with definiteness when this poem was composed. We may be certain, however, that it is one of the later Idylls, judging from the style, and the fact that it is addressed to a chieftain, and not to one of those three great kings, after whose downfall the three kingdoms were divided among minor chiefs. (For further notes on this point see General Introduction to *Pattupattu* : Date of Composition).

VERSIFICATION

Like most of the other Idylls this poem was written in *asiriappa* metre of the *agaval* verse. (For explanation of this metre see General Introduction to *Pattupattu* : Versification).

MALAIPADUKADAM

A band of dancers go along with drums
On which sweet tunes are played. They are made tight
With straps, and sound like the thunder of the sky
O'ercast with clouds that bring enriching rains.
They also have small drums ; fine cymbals bright
Of melted brass sheets made ; horns on which hang
Fine tassels made of peacock's feathers ; flutes
That look like trunks that hang between the eyes
Of elephants ; short flutes that sound with these
In unison ; the *thattai* drum with straps
That run between the sides ; loud cymbals large
That keep good time ; one-sided *pathalis*
That serve to measure notes and instruments
Beside these, all enclosed in bags that fit
Them well and look like jak fruit bunches large
Maturing in the rainy months.

There is a narrow path that goes straight up
On mountain sides where many gall trees grow.
The ground is filled with stones. Here hunters armed
With arrows, and their wives point out the way
To those who travel that they may be saved
From troubles great. This band of singers walk
Not minding hardships on this pathway steep
Made on the mountain sides by clearing rocks.

These expert singers play such various tunes
As are enjoyed at courts of wealthy kings
Who take delight in music sweet. They play
On large loud-sounding *yals* constructed well
To suit the rules of music; and they have
Nine strings that could be made or tight or loose
Like women's bangles. They are stretched out quite
Without a knot, and made of strands well picked
And twisted, and by test found musical.

The *yal's* head has a row of little holes
Like ordered grains of *varagu's* ears, and these
Are filled with nails. A new-made ivory bridge
Makes tense the strings. A golden-hued new piece
Of leather fastened well with glue is stretched
O'er the head. Its middle like the navel looks;
Its sides are joined, proportioned, high, fork-shaped,
And bent, resembling a woman's stomach fair—
Whose fivefold locks are scented so, that bees
That sit on them themselves are filled with scent—
On which lie ordered hair that grow right up
To beauteous breasts attractive to the eye.
Its raised bent handle that is polished smooth
With a sharp file has a decent look, and's black
Like *kala* fruits.

There too are female singers whose small feet,
Which stones do prick resemble moving tongues
Of panting dogs that freely run on paths
In mountains high. Deer-like and red-streaked eyes
They have. They on their wrists wear bangles bright.
Like a flock of peacocks tired, their tails let down,
They stand round thee, O chief of this fine band
Who jewels fine receive as gifts ! They rest
Relieved of toil, their children left behind,
Beneath refreshing shades that are as cool
As water fresh of pools in which one bathes
In sandy woods where cleansing waters flow.

(A minstrel meets this band and speaks these words :—)
As streams that flow from mountains high whose banks
Are full of flowers do hasten to the sea
And sweep along things in their way, so we
Have come from Nannan great that gave us gifts.
Go then, e'en as a flight of birds that speed
To eat good forest fruits, to him, the son
Of Nannan, with high hopes. His wide breast decked
With garlands is attractive to the bees.
He is the spouse of women chaste with breasts
Resembling those of statues, shoulders smooth,
And eyes like blossoms cool. In battle-fields
His strength that could not be
withstood doth cause Great havoc. But to those who noted are
For sowing, so to speak, the seeds of praise
His gifts are like fresh water after drought.

He ever is engaged in worthy things
And entertains not useless thoughts.
His wrists on which he wears fine ornaments
That fit him well are expert in the use
Of the bow. If thou desiring certain gifts
Dost go to him, auspicious is the time
In which thou dost for thy own profit great,
Since thou hast chanced to meet me now.

Do hear me well when I describe to thee
The merits of the way, the places fit
In which thou may'st find rest, the food that grows
In his extensive realm that always yields
Great wealth, the nature of his mountains great,
His groves, his beast-infested woods, his gifts
To poets of rare jewels taken from
Defeated foes, abundant gifts that bring
Undying fame that will endure as long
As the world lasts, and knowledge great with which
He punishes the foes that heed him not.
Hear of his state in his assembly hall
Where he distributes gifts, and not content,
He gives a second time rewarding those
Who either stand or sit while praising him,
And those who sing and those who dance with lands
He seized from conquered foes. He gives his gifts
Like those unfailing clouds that ceaseless pour
Pure rain in copious showers. When learned men

Who go to his distinguished court could not
Express themselves in full, his courtiers good
Of breeding high fill up the gap and clear
Hard points so well that all are satisfied.
By nature he is like the god whose food
Is poison, he who lives in Naviram hill,
Who makes the sea-girt earth to tremble much,
Inspires great fear, and with his famous strength
Doth put to flight its foes, just as the sun
Brings in the day removing darkness wide.
His ancestors invaded distant lands
And killed their foes there putting them to flight,
And gave to experts in the war-like art
Of fighting with the spear in the battle-line,
Where stand tall elephants, their due rewards.

Now hear me when I speak of the king's old town
Far famed. Round it are moats with water deep

In which live bent-legged crocodiles that seek
Their prey, and walls that seem like sky-high hills.
Hear also of the lands that lie in the path
On which you wish to go. They have become
Quite new because of added wealth derived
From hamlets rich. The nature of the land
Is this. In it are clouds which lightning splits
That pour down rain as though they wished to please
The people who desire to see the seeds
Which they sow in the earth productive grow.
In spacious lands where rains abundant fall,
The thin *musundai* creeper bears white blooms
Resembling Pleiads in the broad, black sky.
The sesamum that springs up from the seeds
Sown in the fields has many pods that look
Like blue sapphire. In forests, where are ponds
Like water pots, the pods do not turn red,
As drops of rain upon them fall, and they
Mature becoming black. They grow so thick
That only seven of them could well be grasped
Together ; and the seeds are full of oil.
The panicum whose ears are intertwined
Like trunks of elephants that fight in sport
Is fit for harvest. On their stubbles short
The *avarai* creeper sheds its blossoms white That
looks like drops of curds ; its fruits are curved Like a

sickle. In wide fields the *varagu* plant,
Quite ready to be reaped with double stalks
Resembling fingers joined together well
By one who argues, lie spread out on rocks
Like buffalos recumbent on the paths.
In flower-filled forests sheaves of bamboo rice
Matured by rains are ready to be crushed
And into *aval* made. White mustard sown
In unploughed fields that are with weeding hooks
Prepared grows thick becoming quite mature.
The roots of ginger grow in image shapes
Acquiring pungency. Thick *kavalai*
Sends down its tubers into pits, and these
Look like the curv-ed knees of elephants,
And ready to be ground out into flour.
The plantain grows in crowded groves of hills.
Their unblown buds that touch the hills look like The
handled spear that pierces elephants.
Their bunches thick hang down as they mature.

The bamboo rice becoming ripe and fit
For use stand motionless. The fruit trees bear
Beyond their season, and black *naval* fruits
Fall down on rocks when shaken by the wind.

The *ooyavi* vine that doth with water vie
In quenching thirst looks cool and spreading grows.

The ashy *koovai* root mature enough
For being ground into flour. The mango sweet
Is so replete with juice that one does not
Desire enjoying any other fruit.
The broken fruit of long-stemmed *asni* jak
Looks like a mouth that's sore, and scattered lie
Its seeds. On long hill slopes where owls hoot loud
With double notes like the small drum's sound whose sides
Are with the fingers alternately played.
The jak trees with their moving branches soaked
With plenteous rains have fruits mature that hang
One fruit below another, bent by weight,
And look like drums that travelling singers bear.
In fields with stubbles white are grown white rice
And hill rice tossed by winds that ripen well
With milk-white juice. The sugar-cane's sweet stalks
Are bent, and grow exuberant and thick
Upon their beds. They slant when tossed about
By strong and noisy winds, resembling much
The lances of a troop disorganised.
They are mature enough for being cut
And made fit for the press. The water-bloom
With long and fragrant petals open out,
And is the very form of blackness pure.
The tawny eagle takes the fire-red buds
Of luxuriant *kanthal* fed by rain, for flesh,
And finding out its error, eats them not,
But widely scatters them upon the rocks
Which much resemble dancing lists o'erspread
With petals red.

The jungle men who live on high hill slopes
Have honey, roots, crates filled with meat and pork,
The parts that are not fit for food left out,
And baskets full of other kinds of meat.
They carry these on poles made of the tusks
Of war-like elephants in battles killed.
Thou and thy kindred will receive this food

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If thou dost wish to stay in the hamlet small
At night with them. Then take the pleasant path
By the *asoka* tree. And with thy kindred wear
Bright fire-red blossoms. Thou wilt then arrive
At mountain hamlets small through rugged paths
Where waving bamboos sound. If thou dost say
That ye are bards of Nannan, victor great,
Who overcomes his foes in battles great,
And is endowed with valour, energy,
And honour great, thou mayst then enter homes
As though they were thy own, and fraternise
With the men as though thou wert a friend to them
Before. So they will speak kind words to thee
That will remove thy tedious journey's pain.
They'll serve thee large flesh slices fried in ghee,
With lovely *tinai* rice.

The mountain portion of the king's domain
Is even better than the land described.
Now hear what kind of food thou'lt there receive :

The meat of iguana hunted by the bitch,
The rich flesh of the deer killed in its flight,

And meat of porcupines, the blood still fresh.
Thou wilt then drink much toddy well matured.

With honey mixed and served in a bamboo pipe,
And toddy made of rice. That thou mayst not
Be tipsy in the morning, thou wilt get
Food cooked by the hunter's wife whose raven locks
Are decked with fragrant blooms. She mixes flour Of
rotten seeds of jak fruits that do float
On streams, with sour-sweet tamarind fruit
That has a whitish shell and butter-milk
In just proportion ; and while cooking it
She stirs it so that the fragrance of the food
Is felt throughout the hills where the *punnai* grows.
She serves this food with boiled white bamboo rice.

Thou wilt receive this food in every house,
Invited by the children there who claim
Relationship. As thou wilt get rare things
Brought from the mountain tops. Thou may'st forget
The gifts thou dost expect from Nannan great
And war-like, and be tempted much to stay
Too long. As thou may'st fall unconscious quite
Becoming pale with fright, if thou dost touch

By chance the lily with its petals trim
Which gods so much desire, or see the homes
Where mountain nymphs reside, do not there stay
For many days, but seek another place.
As there are stone traps laid along the paths
To check wild boars that ruin *tinai* ripe,
Take rest at night and travel after dawn.
If then thou dost walk on untrodden paths,
Thou'lt come across pits formed in lands depressed
In high and stony grounds where reptiles live
Such as dread snakes. And then go up the trees
And clap your hands, and let the women praise
And worship them. Thou may'st then make thy way
A little to the right avoiding them.
The jungle men that guard the *tinai* crops
Now well matured to save their fruits of toil

Ascending lofty platforms clap their hands
And scare away the elephants that live
In hilly woods with slings whose stones abate
Their rage and deal them death like Yama grim.
These stones are sped with force past tall green stems
Of bamboos where sit monkeys and their brood
And make a grating noise. Behind the trees
Take shelter to be safe from these, and then
Go on your way.

There is a path along the river wild
That runs through forests as dark as the night
In which live crocodiles that swallow up
Great elephants. There too are whirlpools, ponds
And pits. 'To walk along this path is hard
As walking in a ditch, and slippery quite.
Walk with thy children who have brownish locks
Like wool of sheep, and hold the creepers strong
That twine round trees that they may be a prop
That will prevent you well from slipping down.
You may give help to one another thus.
On hill slopes where grow waving *eruku*
Whose roots go deep, along the rivers deep
That those who fall in them are quite immersed.
The ground is overgrown with soft smooth moss
That makes the feet slip rendering it hard
To walk in such a place. Support yourselves
On slender plaited bamboo sticks and stalks
Of the *korkai* reed found all along the path.

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An ancient town well-fortified and built
Upon the river banks lies in your way,
In which are ponds where pretty flowers do grow.
It's guarded by tall splendid elephants
Whose faces grey with frontlets are adorned.
In it are troops equipped with bows from which
Are arrows shot that fall like pouring rains.
If thou dost see the god thou dost desire
To worship, thou may'st do so, but abstain
From playing on thy instruments, because
The king's rich hills send blinding drops of rain
That do not cease to fall, and make them wet.
Thou may'st see peacocks that have tails whose roots
Are white like cowrie-shells stand after dance
Tired, as their spread-out tails do weigh them down,
Or see male monkeys that resemble much

The dancers' children leaping on the forks
Of bamboos tall, or see the honeycomb,
Whose shape is like a chariot fine and tall
And pleasing to the gods, on slopes of hills.
Thou shouldst not notice them. But if thou dost,
Thou'lt miss the way on which thou hast to walk
With tender feet. So guard thyself.

If thou shouldst go through forest's hilly paths,
Thou'lt see the black uneven-necked wild boar,
Whose horns are worn out as they dig the ground,
Lie senseless in its white and ghee-like gore
By arrows wounded in the chest by those

Who watch from lofts. Then smokeless dry its flesh,
Removing the hair, in fire made in the woods
By rubbing bamboo sticks together hard.
Eat this and drink clear water crystal-like

From ponds o'ergrown with water-lily fresh,
So that thou may'st find rest from weariness.
Without departing from the place, take rest
At night in stony caves that home-like feel,
With bundles full of ample chunks of food
Accompanied by children at whose birth
Their mothers put away their bangles bright.

Thus rest at night, and rising with the sun
At dawn, go on thy proper forest way.
Avoid the path where lies the python large
Like a fallen tree with glistening eyes and hood

Spread wide. They render strong fierce elephants
Quite powerless, and swallow them. As men
Do not, ignoring their past birth, dare pluck
The blooms whose scent is widely felt, or fruits
That none can eat without the risk of life,
Though thereby they may much enjoyment lose,
Go looking neither right nor left, and note
My hints. Do not go near these long-stemmed blooms
And fruits, and clump of trees that look as cool
As ponds. Walk slowly on the extensive hills
From which thou canst survey the country where
On banyan branches full of fruits mature

Large flights of birds in unison do sing,
As though together many instruments
Were played. There is a broad hill in the woods
That's thick with shady trees, which e'en the sun
That courses in the sky doth never pierce.
Here even foresters become confused
Who with their bows unbroken go about
At night when it is hard to find one's way.
Avoid this path, and, on the rocky stretch
Assembling, play thy instruments, and make
Loud music sweet. On high hills from which flows
A sweet-voiced river, many hillmen live
That guard the forest. These will hurry up
To take away thy fear when thou dost lose
Thy way and feel confused and frightened much,
Like those who seeing persons in distress
That lost their way and fell in waters deep,
Make haste to pull them out. They'll show thee fruits
Sweet to the taste and pretty blossoms good
To wear, and guide thee in thy risky way.
All of thy singing band will these enjoy.
Advancing led by those who know the way,
Walk slowly step by step upon the hills,
Some long, some short, that make those quake with fear
That are not quite accustomed to the place.
When thou dost lie beneath the striped tree shades
Where blooms lie strewn, thou wouldst hear many kinds
Of sounds in all directions where the scent
Of jak fruit's honied juice is felt on hills
When monkeys tear and eat the scooped out fruits.

As nymphs swim in the waters of the stream
That flows with rapid noise and brings from tops

Of hills their produce rare, the sound they make
Resembles that of thy own instruments
Producing music sweet. The noise is heard
Of men who round up the leading elephant
That stands defiant parted from its herd
With tusk raised, after eating *tinai* crops
Of jungle men that from high lofts keep guard
On hills; the hillmen's dirge for those that lost
Their lives killed by the porcupine that lives
In caverns deep and shoots its piercing quills;
The songs that hillmen's wives with hair as dark
As river sands sing that their men might not
Much feel the pain of wide deep gashes made
By the tiger fierce upon their breasts; the shout,
"The tiger!" women make, who on their hair
Wear golden *vengu* blooms that opened out
The previous day; the noise like thunder made
By pregnant elephant with kindred near
When strong striped tiger doth upon her pounce,
Her absent mate away on search of food;
The piercing and continued cries of grief
Which the monkey that has fingers black sets up
With its leaf-eating kin, when it doth lose
Its child because it failed to hold it safe,
And let it fall within a cavern deep;
The shouts of those who pilfer honey sweet
Stored up by bees for profitable use
On high attractive hills beyond the reach

Of monkeys wild, by climbing ladders tall;
The joyous shouts of hillmen who destroy
The forts of foes, and deem the spoils they take
Are rare gifts pleasing to their spear-armed king; The
sounds the small drum makes whose sides are made
With leather of the deer which hillmen kill
Who toddy drink and with their spouses dance
In pairs on sky-high mountain tops; the noise
Unceasing made by streams that flow along
O'er stony ground as they fall into caves,
Like to the sound tall well-built chariots make
When they run fast; the driver's shouts that tries
To tame the angry, fierce-eyed elephant
Caught by the eddies of the river wild,
And ordered to approach to be secured
To poles; the noise of maids in fields that strike
The bamboo scaring-rods; the loud noise caused
When the humped bull parted from its herd contends

With the swift male elk accustomed much to fight,
And these without retreat each other wound
With force, and herdsmen of the *mullai* land
And hillmen of the *kurinchi* shout loud
Together to announce the winning side;
The noise made by contending bulls that make
The *mullai* and the *kurinchi* blossoms fade;
The shouts of boys that coupling calves drive them
With fragrant stalks that smell like *kanthal* blooms
For treading out the tasty ripe fruit seeds
Of the jak tree that has clusters rich, which those
Who eat discard, the pulps enjoyed with zest;
The noise of mills that crush the sugar cane;
The music of the songs by women sung
Who pound the *tinai* grain; the noise of drums
That watchers beat to scare away wild boars
That root out *sempu* ripe and turmeric;
And echoes loud of all these sounds are heard
Among the mountains. These and other sounds
Are heard in the plains and in the mountain tops.
The hills resonant with these various sounds!
In number countless in all quarters seem
Like roaring ruttish elephants.

This wild hill region is as distinguished
As large towns where great festivals are held
And people lose their sleep, as drums are played
For women dancers wearing woven wreaths
Of many tints. You may there see and hear
The things that gratify the eye and the ear
As much as you desire, and eat rich foods
Of various kinds. If thou dost wish to enjoy
These things still more, thou may'st stay there some days
And feel at home as though thou wert their kin.

Thou may'st then leave behind the mountains great
On which it thunders. They belong to him
On whose breast Lakshmi sits enthroned,
And who has waged great wars against his foes.
Ere thou dost go, let women musicians
That play the wondrous *yal* on sweet dark hills
Sing *kurinchi* songs. Thou may'st thyself adore
The local gods, thy palms in worship joined,
And make thy sacred vows.

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On mountains high until the rains set in
Lie clouds that are as soft as cotton wool,
And are so low that one could touch them well.
Take shelter within caves that look like wells
That the instruments you carry with your kin
That do not know the way may not be wet
With gentle rain that drizzles from the clouds.

Do not approach the hills where there are piles
Of broken stones. Besides, great risks there are
That bring pain hard to bear in hollows dread

On mountain sides that fascinate the eye
Of those who look upon them. Thou may'st walk
Supported by the rod on which is borne
The plastered drum to aid thy tottering steps.
If thou dost wish to use the painful path
Much heated by the sun on rocks whose stones
Are sharp like heated spears, till evening wait
When the sun abates its heat. Thou'lt find here forts
Where captains great wait on the king renowned. In
them are crowds of elephants that look
Like clouds that are on high. These
strongholds serve To ruin kings that dare to
fight with him.

When thou dost travel by the forest paths,
Along which grow vines as though they were spun,
Walk slow not letting go the hand of him
Who goes before thee, taking care to guard
The fine sweet-sounding *yal's* head and the sides
Of the loud-voiced drum that's tightened well with straps
From being damaged by the stick with which
He clears a way for thee. Near rocks that stand
So close that they resemble elephants
In fight are many woods where fall much rain.

On many junctions there are planted stones
Inscribed with noted names of *maravars*

Who, finding that their foes raised shouts of joy
When they retreated, were ashamed, returned,

Considering the moment opportune,
And yielded up their lives. These stones too speak
With such contempt of those who flee from foes.

Thou may'st go after playing on thy *yal*
Observing ancient rules and singing songs

That please the ear in praise of gods that live
In planted stones. Those who in ignorance

Once took the wrong path should on places clean
Lay knots of grass where roads do meet, as signs
To warn those who desire to go that way
From making the same mistake thou didst once make.
In sacred woods of many regions where
The king's foes live are crossways that excel
Those elsewhere found. Here stones are set beneath
The smooth-stemmed *mara* tree on which are names
Of those inscribed who fought to earn world's fame.
The woods are such that those who even think
Of them do tremble much with fear.

Let people know that thou art on thy way
To the king who doth wear sweet flower wreaths, who gives
Fine chariots tall, whose hands are ever bent
With giving much and who reserves not things
For selfish use. Then places strange will seem
To thee as well-known as thy own king's towns
That other towns excel in wealth and ways
Of ancient times. Go through these lands, and rest
When thou dost feel quite tired.

The stag stands in the forest crying loud
With grief because a tiger killed its mate.
Among the shrubs where fragrant creepers grow
The frightened red-eyed deer with swiftness speeds.
In herds where there are bulls are cows which graze
In alien fields. They yield sweet chank-white milk
Which bangled wives of herdsmen tending flocks
Will serve to thee in plenty. Thou wilt then
Desire as welcome guest to get more strength
And be relieved from the journey's weariness
Far from thy native home. If thou dost cross
At night the noisy woods there, thou wilt find
Large flocks of many kinds of sheep and goats
And rams whose noise is like the murmur of the sea.
They are so mixed that they look like the rice
Of diverse kinds by barter bought. Thou'lt drink
Their milk and eat milk-rice not meant for thee.
The herdsmen lie on beds of sheep skins made
Together sewn that look like cushions stuffed
With fluffy hair. Rest near the fires they light
To scare away wild beasts, and then depart.

If thou a crowd of hunters dost espy
That guard the king's lands armed with fearful bows
And arrows sharp that fly beyond the mark,
Thou may'st inform them thou dost go to see
The chaste queen's husband who destroys the foes
That would not heed his hests nor would submit.
They will thee urge to feast on flesh and roots.
They will protect thee, and will do no harm.
Proceed then on the way they indicate.
This is the nature of that forest land.

Adorn thyself with pretty garlands made
Of flowers of the honey-laden *mara* tree
And blossoms of the *yam* with shining twigs
Which elephants much love to break, and bound
Together close with *maral* fibres dry.
As the highland path is cooled well by the rains,
Thou may'st the water drink that thus collects,
And bathe in it, and, taking some of it,
Go on thy way.

That thou may'st be relieved of the journey's pain
Caused by thy travelling during day, at night
The folk that live in grass-thatched clay-built huts
In hamlets wide will give thee pottage sour,
In which are mixed the seeds of the *avarai* vine

Whose flowers are red resembling *vengai's* blooms,
And bamboo rice that is in uplands grown.
If thou dost stay some days, thou wilt receive
Each day white rice-paps that are large and made
Of minute grains that look like golden chips
That is well-flavoured with fine cooling ghee
And *tinai* ground so fine the flour appears
Like powdered sugar-crystals, matchless quite.
Thou may'st depart from thence when night is o'er
And it is dawn, observing well an hour
Auspicious, having soundly slept well-warmed
By the soft logs' fire that well removes the cold.

This fertile *marutham* land, the king's domain,
Contains the brown-stemmed *kanchi*, watery reeds,
Soft fields, fair gardens and small villages.
Stay there one day or more, and thou wilt get
In every hamlet diverse kinds of things
That are as pleasant as the various tunes

That on a *yal* are played. The fishers' wives
Adorned with garlands of the *pahanrai*
Mix slices of the large-necked *valai* fish,
Caught by the toddy-selling fishermen
That search the *maruthum* land that teems with grass
And fragrant blooms, with slices large that look
Like sides of drums of the red-eyed *varal* fish
Resembling trunks of elephants and caught
By patient anglers with their fishing rods
Long-lined. Along with these they serve the rice
By farmers brought who pull down heaps of sheaves
And tread them out on high lands next to fields
Where crabs do crawl about. Thou'lt then receive
In every threshing floor, when the young sun sheds
Its rays, the toddy clear distilled from rice
That wobbles in huge pots in fullness glad.
Thou and thy kin will eat the white rice served
With white flesh slices, bones removed, a food
That is inviting, and for Nahnan fit
Who garlands wears which honey-bees attract,
And who in well-constructed chariots rides.
First rest thyself, and then thy good *yal* play
The *maruthum* tune to sound in unison
With the sound of farmers who their oxen drive.
Protect thyself against the red-eyed bull
That, separated from its herd, doth charge
With forceful speed and bellows loud disturbed
By the noise made by the drums which those who reap
White rice do beat. Then go along the banks
Of the Seyaru that flows with eddies strong
With speed, revolving like the potter's wheel.
They are quite pleasing to the sight and brings
Unceasing wealth. The ancient king's domain
Is a land of victory great, and full of wealth.
There are groves large and cool where swarms of bees
Do hum, high walls that frighten scornful foes
And many spacious streets where crowds do throng,
Whose bustle sounds like the murmur of the sea,
Or like the noise crowds make on festive days.

Forked crossways, sky-high palaces that look
Like hills, where ancient clans live happy lives
Who never wish to leave their good old homes,
And streets with houses lining either side
Resembling much a river broad with banks :
These are in the king's domain not far from here.

MALAIPADUKADAM

219

Without fear enter the tower's wide wicket gates
Where war-like *maravars* stand guard and keep
Their dark-stemmed spears ; they kill the foes
Of the king with shining swords, and throw away
Their severed heads to be devoured by kites.

When dancers who have come a long way there
And occupy the inns thy presence note,
They'll know that thou art also there to pray
For presents from the great and mighty king
Who looks like Muruga, the god of war.
As they will kindly look on thee and ask
That thou remain with them as welcome guest
And be relieved of painful loneliness,
Thou may'st stay and enjoy their company.

The palace front where there are stationed guards
Whom foes could not resist resemble much
The delta of the great cool Kaveri
That rising from the western mountains speeds
To the sea. You will there find the timid calf
Of the wild cow caught when straying from the herd
That rests beneath the *mara* tree ; the calves
Of elephants, the bear's dumb bent-legged cubs ;
The *varadai* with eight bent legs that lives
On mountains high ; the large strong-headed rams ;
The mongoose angry-eyed that doth destroy
The holes of snakes ; the large-eared calf of deer
With timid eyes which the tiger killed, that lives
In lairs ; the iguana with crook-ed legs
That crawls on stony ground vermillion red ;
The peacock timid-eyed that dances well
On hills ; the loud-voiced cock that calls its mate
In woods ; the drum-like fruit of the big wild jak ;
The ripe sweet-smelling mango fruit whose juice
Tastes sweet like powdered sugar-crystals clear ;
The rain-fed fragrant spreading *narai* vine
Adorned with buds ; the *nurai* roots that look
Like yokes on shoulders borne ; the camphor tree
That yields big crystals ; sparkling gems ;
Great heaps of pearl-filled tusks of elephants
Of might killed in the fights with tigers striped ;
Bent-petalled *kanthal* blossoms that appear
Like broken bangles ; blooms of the *naga* tree
And of the *thilaka* ; green pepper grown

On dark vines; toddy mixed with honey old; Sweet
curds of bluish colour made from milk
Of buffalos and kept in bamboo pipes;
Rich honeycombs from which sweet honey drips
In long hill tops and tasty *asni* jak.

Approach the courts where sky-high elephants
Stand crowded. Drums throb loud whose sounds do match
Dread thunder, and large flutes of bamboo made
With open stops are played. Let women dance
To music sweet of songs that harmonise
With stringed small *yal* with handles dark on which
Is played the *marutham* tune. Let songstresses
Who know how they should do their duty best
Praise first the god supreme that has great power
In strict accordance with the music rules
Observed from olden times. Then you may sing
New songs and use such praise as this: "Thou art
Descended from those kings who never failed
To stand by promises they made. Although
Great men that could know right from wrong did live,
They are forgotten now. But thy great name
Will be remembered e'er as long as the world
Doth last, as thou, O chief, hast paid thy debt
By generous gifts." Thou may'st thus flatter him
And speak of other splendid deeds of his.
But he will not permit thee thus to express
In full the words of praise thou dost intend

To speak. He'll say, "Enough that thou hast come
With love to me. Much trouble thou hast had
In coming here." He then will thee invite

To his rich, splendid palace in which are
His captains noted in the battle-field,
And he will seat himself in the audience hall

In which is heard the assembly's bustle great.
There have been kings in number greater than
The sands of the Seyaru, the pleasant stream

That leaps from high hills pouring forth a mass
Of water at great speed, who though possessed
Of kingdoms great, good counsellors and lands
Extensive, yet have been small-minded so
That they refused to help their suppliants,
And lacked a generous heart. They passed away
Not leaving lasting names, which died with them.
But the king desires to spend the days that God

Gives him in leading well a worthy life
With heart as high as the sky and large enough
For generous gifts, and full of greater joy
Than that which even those who get his help
Do feel. He will thee give some pretty clothes,
Whose fine web is not visible, for thee
To wear in place of rags that clothe thy waist.
If thou dost wish to stay a few days more,
And spend a pleasant time, thou wilt receive
Without stint boiled rice long and white, and flesh
With blood still fresh of the game caught by the bitch.
Thou wilt enjoy this food throughout thy stay,
As much as when thou tasted it at first.

If thou then hint that thou dost wish to leave
  And go back to thy village home, he will
  Present the leader with a lotus made

Of gold; and women dancers, jewels bright.
He will too give thee lofty chariots fine
That smoothly glide in line like running streams,
Large elephants that thou wouldst take for hills
Which he himself did not entrap, large herds
Of kine with bulls that wear resounding bells,
And steeds whose necks are decked with ornaments,
And which do shake their manes with pride. He'll give
Besides gifts buried long within the earth.
His bangled hands that do shower jewels bright
On needy bards are ever downward bent,
So that his merit great is never lost.
He showers free gifts on them as rains come down
On tops of Naviram high, the fertile hill,
On which tall bamboos grow. He will present
These gifts the day before he lets thee go.
He is the lord of this extensive land
That lies surrounded by the hills on which
Flow streams that look like flags of victory great.

NOTES

10. *thattai.* A drum, otherwise called *karadigai*
the grunt of a bear.

because it resembles

12. *pathalis.* A wide-faced drum with only one side.
(cf.

28. *large loud-sounding yal.* There were two kinds of *yal :*
S. P. Padai), and the other large (cf. *P. P. Padai*).

one small

30-31. *made tight or loose.* For another simile for
see *S. P. Padai* ll. 289-290 and *P. P. Padai* ll. 19-20.

the same thing

41. *woman's stomach.* It should be remembered that
ordinary women
were practically naked in those days.

50-51. *moving tongues of dogs.* A very fine simile. Cf.
S. P. Padai. l. 23.

52. *red-streaked.* Red streaks in the eye were
beauty.

considered a sign of

(A line is introduced before l. 61 which is not in the
text for the sake
of clearness).

62-65. The point of comparison is abundance.

70. *spouse of women.* Polygamy prevailed in those days.

71. *statues.* The word in the text may be also translated as painting.

Anyway the people were versed in decorative arts.

75. *sowing seeds of praise.*

presents. Somewhat humorous.

They sow the seeds of paise and feap

79. *ornaments.* Men too wore bangles.

81. *thou.* The leader of the band.

82. *auspicious.* The observance of auspicious hours prevailed among Hindus.

has always

85. *Do hear me.* The narrator repeatedly asks the *panars* to listen

to him. This is a peculiarity in the narration in this poem.

93-94. Somewhat hyperbolical.

99. *stand or sit.* Cf. *M. Kanchi* ll. 741-742.

103-106. Cf. Theseus in *M. S. N. Dream.*

108-109. *god — Naviram.*

drank poison to save the gods.

According to Hindu mythology Siva

On the Naviram hill was a shrine of Siva.

133. *Pleiads.* See Introduction : Social Life.

148-150. *double — argued.* A vivid simile.

152. *bamboo rice.* Rice grown in wild land.

154. *aval.* This eatable is made by crushing moistened rice grains.

163-164. A very striking and appropriate simile. See Introduction : Similes.

163. *unblown buds.* In Tamil பொத்தி.

184. *like drums.* In l. 15 the comparison is the other way : the drums are compared there to jak fruits.

228. *hunted by the bitch.* South Indian hunting-dogs were famous. Cf. *P. P. Padai* l. 145.

238. *sour sweet.* Sourness is considered to be one of the five essentials for tasty curry.

245. *invited by children.* This shows the modesty of the mothers.

263-264. *clap — worship.* See Introduction : Religion.

279-280. *crocodiles — elephants.* A hyperbole.

340-341. *as men — birth.* The meaning seems to be that their past actions prevent them from plucking the flowers. See Introduction : Religion.

366-368. The point of comparison is promptitude.

380. *monkeys — eat.* This shows that jak fruits were abundant.

397. "*the tiger!*" *Vengai* is both tiger and tree. Hence the cry.

405. *leaf-eating kin.* Monkeys are, of course, vegetarians.

442-443. *songs — grain.* Various songs were sung when people were engaged in different activities.

449-451. From these italicised lines the title
dirived. See Introduction: Nature pictures.

464. *Lakshmi.* Goddess of wealth.

Malaipadukadam is

468. *kurinchi songs.* Each of the five regions had its
Cf. l. 619.

special songs.

469.

504.

515.

Life.

local gods. Minor gods.

maravars. A caste from which soldiers were recruited.

knots of grass. A topical allusion. See Introduction:

Social

534-554. The *mullai* region is described.

559. *the chaste — husband.* The wife of the king is
in.

indirectly brought

619. *marutham tune.* Cf. l. 467.

651. *Muruga.*
shipped.
Besides Siva the Dravidian war-god also was wor-

657-658. *resemble Kaveri.* The point of comparison
Cf. *P. Palai* l. 5; *P. A. Padai* l. 285.

is abundance.

698. *god supreme.* Siva.

720-721. *in number — Seyaru.* A frequent exaggerated speech.

734-735. *fine web — invisible.* The art of weaving was highly developed and fine clothes were exported to the West. Cf. *S. P. Padai* l. 308; *P. A. Padai* l. 103.

744-745. *lotus — gold.* A jewel highly prized. Cf. *M.* l. 743.

P. Kadam,

TIRUMURUGATTUPADAI

TIRUMURUGATTUPADAI

INTRODUCTION

NAME

The title of this Idyll means a poem giving guidance for going to sacred Muruga. This *attupadai* differs from others noted before in that here people are directed to a god for spiritual benefits instead of for patronage to kings. (For explanation of *attupadai* see General Introduction to *Pattupattu: Attupadai*).

SUBJECT MATTER

The poem opens with an account of the splendour of Muruga. Then follows a graphic description of the celestial damsels that dance and sing around the god. This is followed by a most revolting account of demonesses who go through devil dances, while the god cuts down *Asuras*. Then is the time for a devotee to approach the feet of the god, if he wishes to obtain salvation. The splendid city of Madura is then brought in incidentally, as west of it is the famous Tiruparakankunram, one of the shrines in which the god lives, and which is set in the midst of beautiful surroundings. Then we are taken to another shrine, Tiruchiralvai, to which the god goes on a triumphal march through the sky mounted on an elephant beautifully caparisoned. In this section is a detailed description of the six faces and twelve arms of the god and the functions performed by them. The third shrine is Tiruvavinankudi. Here the god spends some days with his spouse, Devanayagi, and is visited by the three gods, Siva, Vishnu and Indra. Along with these go ascetics of high character, Gandharva musicians with their womenfolk, thirty minor gods and twenty-seven "exalted ones." Then the three great gods are described. Vishnu goes with the *garuda* flag. Siva of three winkless eyes goes with Uma, his spouse, attached to the left of his body. Indra is a handsome god with a thousand eyes who achieved merit by a thousand sacrifices. These three

along with others approach Muruga to intercede on behalf of Brahma who was banished to the earth by the god for some wrongful act. All these fly through the air making a thundering sound. The next shrine is Tiruveeragam, the abode of Brahmins who observe their religious duties punctiliously. The scene shifts to the hill regions inhabited by *kuravas*. Their beautiful women are clad in leaf and flower garments. The god goes among them well-decked, dances with these mountain maids embracing them, and accepts their offerings. There is a vivid description of the rites performed by the *kurava* priestess. Then the devotee is told at great length how to approach and address the god, and how he could attain salvation. The concluding lines are a fine poetical description of the waterfalls and rivers in which the god is said to manifest himself.

MURUGA WORSHIP

Muruga was originally the war-god of the Dravidians, and the patron deity of the *kuravas* or hunting tribes of the Dravidian country. Probably this god is not an entirely imaginary being, but a war-like king that was deified, as often happened in the case of heroes of primitive communities. In this poem Muruga is referred to by various names: the spouse of a wife of spotless purity; the red god; the child of six mothers; the son of the god under the banyan tree; the child of Kotravi; the child of the Ancient One; the captain of the heavenly hosts; the god of *kurinchi;* the tall god; the god of the hills and God. The meaning of Muruga is the eternally young one, or the beautiful

one.

The poem belongs to the period when Dravidian and Aryan cultures began to commingle. So the Muruga of the poem is a blend of Dravidian and Aryan gods. The Aryans wisely incorporated Dravidian deities in their own pantheon. In the section, *Tiruparankunram*, we have the revolting picture of the terrible demonesses that accompany Muruga going through the *tunangai* dance in the Dravidian manner. In the section, *Tirucheeralavi*, we have a description of Muruga with his six faces and twelve arms. This is the Aryan conception of Kartigesa, the war-god and son of Siva. In the succeeding section, *Tiruvinankudi*, there is an account of a deputation of the three great gods, Vishnu, Siva and Indra, *rishis*, Gandharvas, thirty minor gods and other "exalted ones", all Aryan, waiting upon Muruga to plead for the Aryan god, Brahma. In the next section, *Tiruveeragam*, we have a picture of Brahmins who are Aryans, and their religious life. In the section *Kunruthoradal* (dancing on the hills) is a

description of the Dravidian *kurava* dance in honour of the god. In the last section, *Pazhamuthircholai* (the grove of ripe fruits), we note the welding of the two cults. There is a graphic description of the *kurava* priestess of Muruga and her ceremonies, and this is followed by a description of Muruga which identifies him with the Aryan god, the son of Siva.

We may observe that after this Muruga disappears from Tamil literature, and Siva and Vishnu monopolise the field.

Four hill shrines are mentioned in the poem besides others.

The Shrines

The first is Tiruparankunram said to be west of the city of Madura. Even to-day we can see the hill, but it is south-west of the present city. We may, therefore, infer that the old city was situated in a different location. On the hill even at the present time there is the idol of Muruga, and, what is more interesting, an image of our poet, Nakkirar. The next is Tirucheeralavai which is identified with the modern Tiruchendur. The third is Tiruvavinankudi which the Commentator says was known in the days of Auvvayar as Chittanvalavu. According to some commentators it is situated in the Palani hills. The name is derived from Avi, a chieftain. Tiruveeragam is generally identified with a village near Kumbakonam. Arunakirinather, the famous author, identifies it with Swami Malai, twenty miles from Tanjore. As to the other shrines, as in ancient Greece and Rome, hills and streams are associated with various gods, and some of these are said to be the abodes of Muruga. Some commentators think *Pazhamuthir cholai* refers in general to hills, while others think that it is a reference to a particular hill called Alagarmalai, a few miles to the north of Madura.

The Religious Significance of the Poem

Unlike the other Idylls this one is essentially a religious poem. In fact, it is recognised as the eleventh Tirumurai, or sacred poem of the Saivites. It is the daily liturgy of the devotees of Muruga. As such this Idyll is the most popular among the *Pattupattu*, and one that is best known.

Its religious significance is contained in tr. ll. 95-101 and 407-416. A devotee of Muruga advises a seeker of salvation that, in order to attain it, he should, by virtue of his merits acquired in a previous birth, eschew all earthly pleasures, endeavour to lose his consciousness, and have a longing to reach the feet of the god with the object of securing salvation. Muruga then will receive the suppliant with love and kindness, and grant him his desire.

ALLUSIONS TO MYTHOLOGY

The poem is rich in allusions to stories that are found in the *Puranas* and other religious writings. In order to understand clearly certain passages of the poem one should know the stories to which allusions are made.

Tr. ll. 90-94. Siva gave some germs of life to Indra which he presented to seven *rishis*. Six of these gave them to their wives who became pregnant with them, and bore six children. Indra ignorantly hurled thunderbolts on these children, and they combined together in one form and subdued Indra. Again, when the *Asura*, Surapadma, who had two names and two forms, but one body, arose, they became separate and destroyed this Giant. Therefore Muruga is said to come with six forms.

Tr. l. 93. The mango referred to in this line is the one under which the *Asuras* performed their penances that they might obtain half the power of the enemies with whom they fought.

Tr. l. 102. The word used in the text for Madura is *kudal* (கூடல்). There

kudal. Varuna,

is a story connected with Madura being called the god of the sky, intending to destroy Madura ordered his seven clouds to pour down rain on the city to submerge it. But Siva intervened and set his four clouds to drive Varuna's clouds away and form themselves into four towers. Consequently Madura came to be known as *Nanmadakudal*, or the four- towered city.

Tr. l. 229. The story about the destruction of the three cities is that there were three children of Tharakasuran who received great powers from Brahma, and built three great cities: one in the skies, one on earth, and a third in the lower world. They oppressed men and *devas*, and these complained to Siva, who burnt up these cities.

Tr. l. 231. Indra is said to possess a thousand eyes, and there is an unsavoury story connected with this. The god was cursed by a *rishi* for a lustful act, and as a result he had indecent marks all over his body. After the expiation of his crime these marks were changed into a thousand eyes.

Tr. ll. 236-242. The deputation to Muruga was due to the following reason. Muruga having defeated the *Asuras* exclaimed that his victory was due to his spear. Brahma, who heard this, boasted that it was he who endowed the spear with that power. Muruga being incensed at this cursed Brahma to be born on earth. Consequently, the Trinity consisting of Brahma, Siva and Vishnu, could not perform their functions. So the latter

two along with Indra and others went to Muruga to have removed.

the curse

Tr. l. 394. An *Avunan* called Kiravunjan took the form of a mountain and obstructed the path of Agastiar who was proceeding southward. The great *rishi* understood this and laid on him the curse that he could not resume his form again. This *Avunan* hid his brother Tarakan who fought with Muruga; and the god clove the hill and freed the warriors who were imprisoned in it.

RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL CUSTOMS

The poem gives us a graphic picture of the rites and ceremonies of the hill tribes, and there is a vivid and detailed description of the *kurava* priestess and the ceremonies she goes through. She puts up the cock banner; rubs ghee and mustard, chants in gentle tones, scatters flowers, wears two garments, winds a red thread round her wrists, offers rice mixed with ram's blood, sprinkles turmeric, sandal paste and other perfumes, hangs oleander wreaths, burns sweet incense, sings *kurinchi* tunes and dances to the accompaniment of various musical instruments. It is interesting to note that even at the present day hill tribes in Travancore keep up some of these rites and ceremonies.

Along with the above Dravidian religious ceremonies we are given a picture of Aryan customs and rites. The *rishis* have matted locks, clothe themselves with the bark of trees, cover

themselves with deer skins, live an abstemious life and possess eminent moral character and piety. The Aryan Brahmins had already gained a foothold in the Tamil land, and we have a description of their performance of the six duties prescribed for their caste, their forty-eight years of bachelor life enjoined on them, their triple strands of sacred thread and their tending of the three sacred fires. There is a reference to *kandu* which was originally a
reside in it.

branch of a tree cut and planted for the deity to
This is the origin of later idols. Manram is probably a resting place when processions are made in honour of gods. Originally it was an open space under a banyan tree in which the village elders carried on the administration of the village. Later, buildings were put up for the purpose. These were then used also as resthouses for strangers and for religious purposes. (Cf. *P. Palai*, tr. ll. 304-305).

There is an interesting reference to stone pillars erected for cows on which they could rub their backs. As seen in the other Idylls the people of the time were very fond of flowers. Not only did they decorate themselves with them, but used them with leaves to make garments.

Although they used artificial garments also,

it seems that the leaf dress was commonly used. They, however, adorned themselves with artificial ornaments. In this poem we have a mention of tinkling anklets and jewels for the breast, the head, wrists and ears, made of gold, and ornaments made of conch shell. They had various musical instruments for their dances, such as the small drum, the *yal*, the conch, bells and horns. There is an interesting and amusing practice mentioned in the incidental reference to the city of Madura. At its gate, was a ball hung by a thread to serve as a challenge to the enemy. If this remained uncut, the city was regarded invulnerable.

LITERARY MERITS

Could an essentially religious poem like the *Tirumurugattupadai* be properly called an Idyll? An Idyll is a poem descriptive of some picturesque scene or incident chiefly in rustic life. The description of the picturesque life of the hill tribes, their songs, their dances and their simple rituals, and the beautiful surroundings in which they live are sufficient to bring this poem under the category of Idyll.

The Ten Idylls are mere pegs on which are hung beautiful imagery and splendid descriptions of Nature. In this poem, however, the religious object is of greater importance than the poetic element. Consequently, judged as pure poetry it may be considered inferior to the other Idylls, and certainly to the other Idyll by the same poet, *Nedunalvadai*. However, in itself it has high poetical qualities. We may now notice some of its beauties.

Pen-Pictures

The poem abounds in splendid pen-pictures. We may notice the more conspicuous ones. The most poetical passage in the poem is the concluding lines describing waterfalls and rivers, and reminds one of that splendid piece of nature painting in *Nedunalvadai* in which the cold season is described in the most graphic language. Next to this the most striking, but intensely revolting, picture is the description of the ghouls and their dance. Immediately following the pleasing picture of the dancing of celestial damsels, the disgust becomes all the greater.

Nature

The concluding picture of the waterfalls and rivers, besides being an instance of realism serves to show the poet's love of Nature, of which he has given such splendid proof in his other poem. The poet must have watched with interest and feeling the rushing waterfall leaping in sheets "resembling many varied waving flags", sweeping away the trees and products of the hills, making monkeys, elephants and

peacocks shiver with cold, and driving boars and bears to take refuge in caves. There is a conspicuous example of the poet's keen observation of Nature. In his description of Tiruparankunram he speaks of it as a place where

> hum swarms of bright-winged bees.
> They sleep at night in lotus flowers that bloom
> On thorny stalks and awake at dawn and buzz
> Around the honey-scented *neithal* blooms.

How keenly has our poet observed the bees sleeping in the lotus flowers, flitting to *neithal* blooms at dawn, and then shifting to other flowers later on! The poet is interested in heavenly phenomena also. He has watched "the sunlight that is shed upon the sea when the sun shines on it"; "the big clouds pregnant with the water sucked from the sea and poured as rain in plenteous drops"; the thunder attended by lightning's flash and the entrancing sight of the moon surrounded by the stars. He has noted the "owl with its bulging eyes." He has noticed minutely the serpent's "white fangs enclosed in poison bags with holes." As in the case of other poets he is fond of flowers and has observed and described them minutely: the *marutham* petals are red outside and white inside, *vetchi's* stalks are red, lilies are green, *kanthal* petals are red and the lotus flower grows on thorny stalks.

There are no elaborate similes, as in some of the other Idylls.

Imagery : Similes

They are all primitive, and generally with only one point of comparison. A few of them may be noted here; garlands are like chariot wheels; the shoulders of women are like bamboos; breasts of young women are like unopened *kongu* blooms; flowers in ponds are like eyes; the march of the elephant resembles the progress of the tempest; the skin of women resembles mango shoots and their beauty spots are like streaks of gold on a touchstone; the gods travelling through the sky appear like stars as though in bloom, their fast movement resemble the storm in the sea and their strength is like the fire fanned by the wind; the women's gait is like the peacock's strut; the god's arms are drum-like; the waterfalls are like banners; the honeycombs are like the sun's disc and the bear's hair resembles the fibre of the young palmyra tree.

This poem is characterised by the same comparative absence of hyperboles as the other Idylls.

LANGUAGE AND VERSIFICATION

As in the case of the other Idylls the Sanskrit words used in this Poem are less than two per cent., although it is generally

agreed that it was written after the Aryan influence became great in the Tamil land. There are only thirty Sanskrit words in all the 317 lines, excluding those that are common to both the languages. Two archaisms in the poem may be noted. The termination *pu* indicating the past participle, very rarely used by modern authors, occurs eleven times in the poem. Again, the repetition and elongation of the final vowel called *alapedai* to indicate the past participle, seldom used in modern literature, occurs thirty times. In a number of places the Commentator points out various readings and various interpretations of passages.

The versification used in the poem is *asiriappa* peculiar to the *agaval* verse. (For further explanation see General Introduction to *Pattupattu* : Versification).

THE AUTHOR

It is generally supposed that Nakkirar, the author of *Nedunalvadai*, is the author of this poem also. (For an account of the life of Nakkirar see Introduction to *Nedunalvadai*). Here we may add an interesting legend as to how the poet came to write this poem. After the dispute with Siva and punishment for his presumption, Nakkirar was ordered to make a pilgrimage to Benares. On his way he was caught by a demon along with 999 others. When the demon went to bathe before making a meal of him, the poet invoked the help of Muruga to save him, and composed this poem in his honour. The god intervened and freed him. The legend about his dispute with Siva may be fiction made up to illustrate the poet's usual obstinacy, and punctilious accuracy in literary matters.

DATE OF COMPOSITION

It is generally agreed, judging from the Aryan elements in the poem, that this is the latest of the Ten Idylls. Such descriptions as that of the Brahmins and *rishis* show that the infiltration of Aryan culture in the Tamil land was more advanced when this poem was written than when the rest of the Idylls were composed. From the allegorical nature of this *attupadai* we may infer that the poet must have had the other *attupadais* of this group before him. Prof. Sundarampillai, a noted Tamil scholar, is of the opinion that Nakkirar must have lived not later than the fifth century, A.D. He comes to this conclusion after arguing that Sampanther, a Saivite saint, lived in the seventh century, and that our poet lived two or three centuries before him. Another scholar, however, suggests that Nakkirar

lived in the seventh century. (For further notes on the subject see Introduction to *Nedunalvadai* and *Mullaipattu* and to the General Introduction to *Pattupattu:* Date of Composition).

TIRUMURUGATTUPADAI

1. TIRUPARANKUNRAM

He shines in splendour like the light that's shed
Upon the sea when on it shines the sun
That praised by all delights mankind, and moves
Round Meru to the right. His glorious light
Is felt alike by those perceiving him
With the mind, their eyes closed, and by those who look
At him with outward eyes from afar. His feet
Are beautiful and strong, and well support
His votaries. His arms strike down his foes
Like thunderbolts. He is the spouse of her
Who has a bright forehead, and chastity

Unstained. His breast is decked with garlands cool
Round-shaped like a chariot wheel, made of the blooms
Of stout-trunked *mara* tree whose leaves diffuse
A gloom throughout the forest rendered cool
And fragrant by the early showers that fall
From big clouds pregnant with the water sucked
From the sea, and poured as rain in plenteous drops
In the sky whose darkness is dispelled by light.

Celestial damsels crowd in numbers large.
In wooded hills o'ergrown with bamboos large
That grow sky-high. Their small bright rosy feet
Are decked with tinkling bells. Their legs are round.
Their waists are slim, and they have shoulders smooth.
Their undyed garments wrought with flower designs
Are red resembling insects purple-hued.
Around their waists are belts of several strands
Well-set with gems. Their beauty is not due
To artificial ornaments. They wear
Bright jewels made of the finest gold that bears
The name of *naval* tree. Their lustre bright
Is faultless e'en when viewed from distance great.
They deck their smooth and well-formed tresses combed

And ordered by their maids with blossoms small
Of red-stalked *vetchi* plants, and mix with these
The green-stalked water-lily's petals culled.
On the heads in order worn are jewels bright
Called *sridevi* and ornaments well-shaped
Like a right-whorled conch. On foreheads fair
Sweet-scented that are well adorned with spots
Suspended hang another jewel shaped
Like open mouths of sharks. Their spotless hair
Done into a perfect knot is beautified
With large cool *champak* flowers, and over them
They wear bright bunches of the *marutham* blooms
With petals dark outside and white within.
Around their knots of hair are fillets fair

Of pretty red buds that from green stalks sprout
And under water grow. The shining buds
Of rich *asoka* stuck on pretty ears
That match their beauty dangle on their breasts
That shine with jewels bright. On their young breasts,
Shaped like unopened *kongu* buds is smeared,
As though sweet-smelling *marutham* blooms were piled,
Fine coloured scented sandal paste prepared
By grinding strong hard fragrant sandal-wood.
O'er it they spread the pollens fine of blooms
Of *vengai* fully blown. They pluck the sprouts
Of *vila* tree, and throw them charmingly
O'er one another. Then they bless the flag
And wish it great success. Inscribed on it
Is the image of a cock that kills its foe
In open fight achieving victory great,
They also sing and dance with such a noise
That fine hill slopes resound with echoes loud.

In wooded hills are trees that are unclimbed
By monkeys. Here grow fire-red *kanthal* blooms
Untouched by bees, that form the chaplets cool
The god doth wear upon his sacred head.
He plunged once in the cold and rock-girt sea
And made it much disturbed, and the giant killed
With long and flaming leaf-shaped spear.

The frightful demoness whose hair is dry,
Whose rows of teeth discordered are, who has
A gaping mouth and eyes that're tinted green
And roll with rage, whose aspect terrifies,

Who has an angry gait, and belly rough,
Whose ears create much pain upon her breasts
Like serpents fierce that hang from owls, whose eyes
Do bulge, whose thick and shining bangled hands
Hold a dark skull that emits a putrid stench
Arising from the eye-balls eaten scooped
With sharp-nailed cruel fingers stained with blood,
Whose shoulders heave and whose mouth drips much blood,
Doth tread the devil dance and sings the songs
Of victory over foes in fair fights killed
That strike great terror into giants' hearts.
While she doth dance, the god of boundless fame
That wields the javelin red, inspiring fear,
Attacks and cuts in twain the chief of giants

Who bears two names, but has one body huge,
And dims their glory great by cutting down
Their ancient mango tree upon whose boughs
Hang downward bunches thick of blossoms bright.

If by thy good deeds in a previous birth
Thou dost desire the goal of being freed
From consciousness of self, and entertain
The yearning high to attain the sacred feet
Of the Lord, this longing sweet that animates

The virtuous mind that spurns all joys will bring
True wisdom and salvation great at once.

There is the town of Madura in which
The banner won in war is hung aloft,
Along with the well-knit ball of thread and doll
Uncut, as foes dare not invade the town,
And at its gates no war is waged. There are
A fine bazaar street, where great Lakshmi sits
In state ; and many other streets in which
Stand storeyed mansions high. West of this town
Stands Kunram's hill that has extensive fields
Of black clay, where hum swarms of bright-winged bees.
They sleep at night in lotus blooms that grow
On thorny stalks, and wake at dawn and buzz
Around the honey-scented *neithal* blooms.
They hum o'er buds that blossom like the eye
In the pleasant lake near by. In holy hill
The god, in joyful peace abides. There too
Are other shrines.

TIRUMURUGATTUPADA

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2. TIRUCHEERALAIVAI

He rides an elephant whose temples scarred
With pointed goad are ornamented well
With dangling fadeless wreath and frontlet fine.
The bells on either side suspended low
Resound in turn when it proceeds with speed.
Its strength is like the might of the god of death
That could not be withstood, and when it runs
One feels as though a gale were blowing hard.
His head looks splendid with a crown well wrought
With perfect art in its five various parts,
And set with gems that with each other vie
In beauty, and like lightning dazzle bright.
The golden pendants hanging from his ears
Are finished well and flash with glowing light
Resembling constant stars that do attend
The lustrous moon that shines in the distant sky.

His radiant faces six abide in the hearts
Of votaries who perform their pleasant vows.
One face diffuses countless rays of light
Removing from the world its darkness dense.
Another face, because its devotees
Do praise him, casts on them a gracious look
And grants the boon for which they pray with love
And joy. A third is on the watch to guard
The sacrifices Brahmin priests perform,
Who never swerve from practising the rites
The Vedas four ordain. A fourth doth search

The hidden truths and light the sages' minds.
A fifth, repressing his impartial mind,
With a raging heart destroys his hated foes
And celebrates the victory gained by rites
Performed in battle-field. The sixth face loves
To enjoy itself with Valli, consort young,
The pretty daughter of the hunting tribes,
Whose waist is slender like a creeper thin.

As these six faces do their proper work,
So do his upraised arms so highly praised
For prowess great, which flaming weapons hurl
And draw them back and cleave the breasts of foes.
Upon his fair wide breast across which lie
Three red lines drawn a golden garland hangs.

Of these arms, one points upward to protect

The *rishis* that do travel through the air.
Another arm is laid upon the waist.
A third one plies the goad. Another lies
Upon the lap well clothed in garments fine.
Two hands do whirl the fine big disc and spear
To the right. Another shines upon his breast.
Another adds to the beauty of the wreath
That decks the breast. Another waves aloft
Its bangled wrist, and gives the signal sure
For sacrifices of the battle-field,
Another hanging down the sweet-tuned bell
Doth strike and cause a double sound. Again,
Another makes abundant rains pour down
From the blue sky, while the other arm adorns
The maid that lives in heaven with a wedding wreath.
The twelve arms are arranged to do their work
Conforming to the tasks of the faces six.

His settled practice is to travel fast
Along the sky-path towards Tiruchendur
Where virtues great esteemed by the good prevails,
And which increasing grow in wealth and fame.
Celestial drums then sound. Loud trumpets blare.
White conches blow. The peacock pretty-plumed
On his victorious banner gained in war
Screams to the beat of drums that sound like peals
Of thunder. Other shrines there are.

3. TIRUVAVINANKUDI

The Muruga god is wont to spend some days
At holy Avanankudi with his spouse,
Deivayanai, of spotless chastity,
Where come the three great gods to visit him
Great *rishis* come in company with them.
They're clad in barks of trees. Their bright white locks
Are knotted in the shape of right-whorled conch.
Their limbs shine bright with spotless purity.
On numerous days they fast. Their minds are free
From hatred and revenge. Their innate wit
Could comprehend truths not well understood
By learned men. In knowledge eminent,
They reach a further limit than the men
That are great experts in their proper spheres.

They have the wisdom that works out desire
And anger fierce, and never are distressed
By the pains they undergo. Quite genial are
Their ways. They bear no hatred in their hearts.

With these preceding them, march Gandharvas
Well clad in tenuous spotless dress. They wear
Wreaths made of full blown flowers upon their breasts.
They're kind at heart and gentle in their speech.
They play upon their splendid *yals*, whose strings
Are wound to the proper pitch by well-trained ears,
Producing music sweet. Their women are
Without defects and striking in their looks.
Their bodies could resist disease. Their skins
Are tinted like bright mango shoots. When they
Appear, their beauty spots shine like the streaks
Of gold on touchstone. On their waists that rise
And fall, they wear fine zones that brightly glow
With pleasing light.

Of these three gods that go to him, one has
A lofty flag that bears on it the form
Of Garuda whose curved wings many-striped
Kill frightful mighty serpents that possess
White fangs enclosed in poison bags with holes,
And fiery hisses breathe. The other god
Has a flag inscribed with white bull's form raised high
In field of victory. Uma is attached
To one side of his body. Shoulders strong
By many praised, three winkless eyes, and might
With which he burnt the forts of demons three

Are his. The third, a god with handsome looks
Who has a thousand eyes. Performing well
A hundred sacrifices, he achieved
Great victory over foes. On an elephant
He rides that has a pretty gait, four tusks
And a huge curved trunk that reaches to the ground
And much admired. These three gods praised by all
Possess the sole desire to guard the world
Defended by the cities that belong
To the four high gods. They enter the guarded world
Desiring to resume their wonted work
And pray for favour for the four-faced god
Who sprang from a lotus bloom, and deathless lives.

With these march bands of three and thirty gods
Whose fair and faultless wisdom clear doth shine
Like day-light. They belong to classes four.
Along with these proceed exalted ones
That number three times nine. They shine as though
Stars were in bloom. They move with speed like a storm
That rages in the sea. They have the might
Of fire fanned by the wind. Their voice is loud
Like thunder peals that follow lightning's flash.
They fly through air in bands that they may pray
In proper form to gain their former rights.
There are too other shrines.

4. TIRUVEERAGAM

At Tiruveeragam are twice-born men
Who ne'er depart from duties six prescribed.
Their parentage on both sides is esteemed
As pure ; they are of ancient diverse stocks.
They spend their blameless youth of forty years
And eight in paths prescribed. They follow well
The practice of reciting holy texts.
They earn the wealth of tending triple fires
Of diverse kinds. They wear nine threads composed
Of three fine strands. They pray at proper hours,
And after baths allow their wet clothes dry
In body's heat. With hands in worship raised
They praise the god ; in silence they pronounce
The mystic formula of letters six.
The god well pleased sits at this shrine.

5. KUNRUTHORADAL

The god a garland wears of fragrant vines
On which are found sweet-smelling nutmegs strung,
Fair swelling fragrant pepper, jasmine wild
And creepers white. His priest this weaves
Whose chest is daubed with fragrant sandal paste
Of colour bright. The jungle men who ply
The cruel art of killing with their bows,
With toddy drunk matured in bamboos long,
Make merry with their kin that dwell on hills
In hamlets small. They tread the *kuravai* dance
To the small drum's beat. With them are damsels fair
Whose modest walk is like the peacock's strut.

TIRUMURUGATTUPADAI

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They wear wreaths made of blooms that grow in tarns
Around which bees swarm and whose petals fair
When with the fingers stirred give out a scent
Of varied fragrance sweet. Their locks are decked
With fillets made of petals. Round their waist
That shine with waist-strings they a leaf dress wear,
Big, cool and pretty, made of basil sweet
And lovely bright flower bunches intermixed
With oak's white red-stalked blossoms from which bees
Suck honey sweet.

The Red god wears a purple dress, cool shoots
Of *seyali* that quivers on his ears,
A girdle, anklets and a *vetchi* wreath.
He plays upon the flute, doth blow the horn
And sounds the other minor instruments.
He leads a goat, and on a peacock rides.
He has a fine cock-flag, and he is tall.
He wears an armlet on his shoulders strong.
Around him is a band of musicians
Whose voice sounds sweet resembling notes well played
Upon stringed instruments. He dons a shawl
Sweet-scented, cool and fine, above his sash
Worn round his waist that trails upon the ground.
The god is wont to dance upon the hills
With tender-shouldered damsels that appear
Like a flock of deer. The god embraces them
And claps them in his drum-like arms.

He shows his presence at all festivals
That are with much pomp held on holy days.
They then install him with the flag that bears
The image of a cock, and serve him well
With gifts of millet, flowers and flesh of rams.
He is delighted much in these abodes
When his devoted servants sing his praise.
He dwells in lists his priests prepare for him
For frenzied dance. He lives in woods and groves,
In inlets fine, in rivers and in lakes.
He lives in other spots too. He appears
Where many roads do meet, beneath the shades
Of *kadamba* trees bearing blossoms new
And under trees where meet the village folk,

In public halls and in erected posts.
In spots like these are his abodes.

The mountain maid the awful spacious town
Doth finely deck, unfurls the splendid flag
That bears the cock design, and worships him
By using ghee and mustard white, and chants
In gentle tones. She scatters blossoms fine
And wears two garments of two diverse kinds.
Around her wrists she winds a purple thread.
She scatters white parched grain and offering makes

Of pure white rice mixed with the blood of rams
That have exceeding strength and powerful legs.
She offers minor gifts. She sprinkles too
Fresh turmeric mixed with sweet sandal-paste,

And other perfumes too. She hangs fine wreaths
Of oleander blooms and garlands cool
That are of equal length. She blesses well

The towns that lie on wooded mountain slopes.
She burns sweet incense chanting pleasing songs
Of *kurinchi* tune. The roar of waterfalls,

And music sweet of instruments are heard.
She scatters blooms of various hues. She spreads
Red millet mixed with blood inspiring fear

In those beholding it. To please the god
She causes tuneful instruments to sound.
That he may come and strike fear into those

Who do not worship him, she makes the lists
Of frenzied dance resound with music sweet,
While numerous horns do blow and harsh bells ring.
She blesses Pinkamum of trusted might.
They worship him who have obtained the boons
For which they prayed. I have now told thee this,
As I do know the places where he lives.
There or in other spots when thou dost see
His face, praise him with joy adoring him
With palms together joined. Prostrate thyself
Before him that his feet may touch thy head.
With these words known to me extol his name :—

" O blessed one whose forms are six ! Thou born
Of women six, and taken up in the palms
Of one of the Five in meadow overgrown

With *kusa* grass on summits of Himalayas !
Thou offspring of the god that sits beneath
The banyan tree ! Thou son of the daughter born
Of the king of mountains, where big bamboos grow !
Thou death to foes ! Thou son of Kotravi
Victorious over foes in battle-fields !
Thou child of the Ancient One resplendent with
Bright ornaments ! Thou captain of the hosts
Of heaven equipped with the curv-ed bow ! Thou lord
Whose breast is decked with wreaths ! Thou sage
Well-read in books ! Thou peerless hero brave !

Thou warrior bold to whom great victory comes
Without much strain! Thou wealth of Brahmin priests!
Thou object of exceeding praise of seers!
Thou husband of celestial dames! Thou best
Among the heroes great! Thou well-renowned
For the arm of thine that wields the spear! Thou lord
Of *kurinchi* hills that reach the skies that hast

The undying fame of cleaving the mountain great!
Thou lion so brave, among the learned men
Much praised for words of wisdom! Muruga god!
Salvation's goal so hard to reach! O Lord
Beyond all praise that *moksha* grants to those
Who yearn for it! O Cey that grants thy grace
To those distressed, and golden jewels wear
Upon thy breast exposed to battles fierce
Achieving victory! Muruga well-esteemed
That doth protect those who desire thy gifts!
O god of mighty name adored by the great!
Thou that doth bear the name of *Madavalli*,
As thou didst kill the brood of Giants huge!
O victor waxing strong in the battle-field!"

Be not content with praises I have taught.
Say, "I have sought thy feet since it is hard
For men to measure thee and understand
Thy nature, peerless sage!" Ere thou dost speak
Thy wish, his many minions small that are

Of various shapes will come with splendid forms
To the festival and say with one accord,

" Exalted god, this is a suppliant
Who many sweet delightful songs doth sing.
To please those who desire to hear thy praise.
So he deserves protection from thy grace."
He'll then assume a form of power divine

And towering to the skies, but will conceal
His ancient face divine quite from thy sight,
And only show his ancient youthful form
Diffusing fragrance sweet. He will then say
In choice and loving words. " Remove thy fear.
I know thy quest." He will salvation grant
So precious and so hard to gain, that thou
Alone on earth girt with the ocean dark,
Wouldst seem to escape impending ruin great.

Upon these hills leap waterfalls in sheets
Resembling many varied waving flags.
They carry on their bosoms *akhil* wood,
And sweep along the trunks of sandal trees.
They do uproot small bamboos breaking down
Their stems, and flowing down they sweep away
The fragrant, cool and open honeycombs
On lofty hills that look like the sun's bright disc.
The many sweet ripe jak fruit pulps are mixed
In the streams. The fragrant blooms of *punnai* trees
That grow on hill-tops high are shed in them.
The monkeys black, both male and female ones,
Do shiver, and the female elephants

With spotted temples feel the cold intense.
As the torrents leap, the large and pearl-filled tusks
Of huge male elephants are quite submerged,
While gold and gems display their shining hues
Above the surface, and gold dust is washed
Ashore. They break the stems of plantain trees
And dash on coconut trees whose leaves drop down.
The clusters black of pepper blooms bend down.
The spangled peacocks with a modest gait
Scared fly about, and so do peahens strong.
In mountain clefts boars lie concealed in lairs.
And bears too wander that have crook-ed feet
And black-haired bodies that resemble much
The tender black palmyrah's fibre soft.
The black-horned bisons wild set up a roar.

He is the lord of hills from whose tops leap
Great roaring torrents, and in which abound
Rich gardens where the fruits mature.

NOTES

3. *praised by all.* Perhaps worshipped by people of all creeds.

4. *round Meru to the right.* A usual poetic phrase. *Padai* l. 27. Cf. *M. Pattu* l. 4; *M. Kanchi* l. 5.

See note on *P. P.*

26. *insects purple-hued.* The text is *indragopa* A red insect called தம்பளப்பூச்சி in Tamil.

(the anger of Indra).

30-31. *the gold — naval fruit.* Gold called *jambunatha* in a river into which *naval* fruits fall.

is produced

38. *Sridevi.* In the text தெய்வவுத்தி, a head Lakshmi.

ornament worn by

66-67. *unclimbed by monkeys.* Another rendering is, unvisited by the sun's rays. Perhaps a better rendering. மந்தி means light also.

71. *that giant.* Surapadma. An *Asura* corresponding to a Titan in Greek mythology. See Introduction : Allusions.

90-94. For the allusion see Introduction : Allusions.

95-101. This sums up Hindu beliefs.

102. *Madura.* The text is *kudal.* See Introduction : Allusions.

104-117. *Ball of thread and doll.* See Introduction : Religious and Social Customs.

107. *Lakshmi.* Goddess of wealth.

115. *like the eye.* Usually eyes are compared to it is the other way.

flowers, but here

121. *fadeless wreath.* Necklace of gold.

128. *five various parts.* The component parts of a enumerated, such as *makudam.*

crown are usually

161. *travel through air. Rishis* are said to travel protect men from the heat of the sun.

through the air to

175. *The maid.* Valli, the god's consort.

206. *tenuous.*

difficult to explain.

The literal meaning of the text is, smoke-like. Rather
Some interpret it as grey.

219-221. *one.* Vishnu.

224-231. *the other god.* Siva.

226. *Uma.* Siva's spouse. 'Parvati, is attached to his left side.

229. *burnt the forts.* See Introduction : Allusions.

230. *a god with handsome looks.* Indra.

231. *a thousand eyes.* See Introduction : Allusions.

239. *four high gods.* Generally explained as Indra, and Mahesa.
Yama, Varuna,

241. *pray — four-faced god.* See Introduction :

Allusions.

243. *three and thirty gods . . . classes four.* 11 Rudras, 8 Vasus, and 2 Asuras.

They are 12 Adityas,

246. *exalted ones.* Devas, Siddhars, Gandharvas, etc.

255. *Tiruveragam.* See Introduction : Shrines.

256. *duties six.* They are : learning, teaching, sacrifices to be offered, giving gifts, and receiving gifts.

sacrificing, causing

259. *forty years and eight.* For this period remaining unmarried.
Brahmins have to study

262-264. *triple fires — of diverse kinds.* Fire is lit in the form of a triangle, a square and a bow. The three fires are called respectively *ahavaiya, dakshina,* and *gharkapatiya.*

wealth. Their prosperity depends on their tending the

fires carefully. .

268. *Letters six :* நமோகுமாராய (*Namokumaraya*). In
six letters.
Tamil there are

279. *kuravai dance.* A dance of the hills in which
take part clasping each other's hands.

men and women

280. *the small drum.*

In the text தொண்டகம் (*thondagam*).
316. *priests.* In the text *velan* (வேலன்). Lit.
that wields the spear.
the priest of the god

322-323. *under — posts.* In the text மன்றம்
and கந்து (*kandu*).
(*manram*), பொதி (*pothi*),

323. *posts.* Posts were erected for the cows that
backs against them. This shows kindness to animals.

they might rub their

326. *splendid flag.* Another interpretation is
figure of a man's head and a bird's body.

a flag that bears the

361-362. *of women six.* See Introduction : Allusions.

363. *one of the five.* The presiding deities of the five elements. They are Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, Mahesvara, and Sadasiva. The one is Rudra.

365-366. *beneath the banyan tree.* Siva is generally represented as teaching seated under a banyan tree.

368. *Kotravi.* Goddess of war.

370. *Ancient One.* Goddess of the forest.

378. *celestial dames.* Devayanai and Valli, the consorts of Muruga.

381. *reach the skies.* Lit. contend with the skies. An exactly corresponding expression to "sky-scraper."

382. *cleaving the mountain great.* See Introduction: Allusions.

387. *Cey.* Lit. the young one.

394. *giants. Asuras.*

425. *ripe jak fruit pulps.* *Asni* jak.
jak that has sweet pulps.
This is a small species of the

APPENDIX

in
The following are the flowers mentioned in *Kurinchipattu* and not included the translation after line 75 :—

கோடல்
* ஆம்பல்
அனிச்சம்
குவளை
* குறிஞ்சி
* வெட்சி
செங்கொடுவேரி
தேமா
மணிச்சிகை
உந்தூள்
கூவிளம்
எறுளம்
சுள்ளி
கூவிரம்
வடவனம்
* வாகை
குடசம்
எருவை
செருவிளை

* கோங்கம்
போங்கம்
* திலகம்
* பாதிரி
செருந்தி
அதிரல்
* சண்பகம்
கரந்தை
குளவி
* மா
* தில்லை
* பாலை
* முல்லை
* குல்லை
* பிடவம்
* வாழை
* வள்ளி
* நெய்தல்

கருவிளை
பயினி
வானி
குரவம்
பசும்பிடி
வகுளம்
* காயா
ஆவிரை
வேரல்
சூரல்
குரீ இப்பூளை
குறுநறுங்கண்ணி
* குருகிலை
மருதம்

* தாழை
* தளவம்
* தாமரை
* ஞாழல்
மௌவல்
கொகுடி
சேடல்
செம்மல்
சிறுசெங்குரலி
கோடல்
கைதை
வழை
* காஞ்சி
* நெய்தல்

பாங்கர்

* மராஅம்

தணக்கம்

ஈங்கை

* இலவம்

* கொன்றை

அடுப்பு

ஆத்தி

* அவரை
* பகன்றை
பலாசம்
பிண்டி
* வஞ்சி
பித்திகம்
சிந்துவாரம்
* தும்பை
துழாஅய்
தோன்றி

நந்தி

நறவம்

நறு புன்னாகம்

பாரம்

பீரம்

பைங்குருக்கத்தி

ஆரம்

காழ்வை

* புன்னை

நரந்தம்

* நாகம்

நள்ளிருணாறி

குருந்தம்

* வேங்கை

புழகு

The Tamil people are noted for their love of flowers, and the other Poems also mention frequently a number of flowers. In the list of 99 flowers noted above those marked with an asterisk are found in the other Poems. It is curious that in this long list
(காந்தள்), a favourite with

such well-known flowers are not found : *Kanthal*
poets ; *Kadamba* (கடம்பை), a flower sacred

to Muruga, and *Asoka* (அசோக) a flower associated with religious
Other flowers found in the other Poems, and not found in the list are

matters. (அடம்பு), *Kamugu* (arecanut கமுகு) *Kumil* (குமிழ்),
Adampu (அகத்தி), *Thoyil* (தொய்யில்), and *Thumbai* (தும்பை).

Kutku (குற்கு), *Agatti*

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